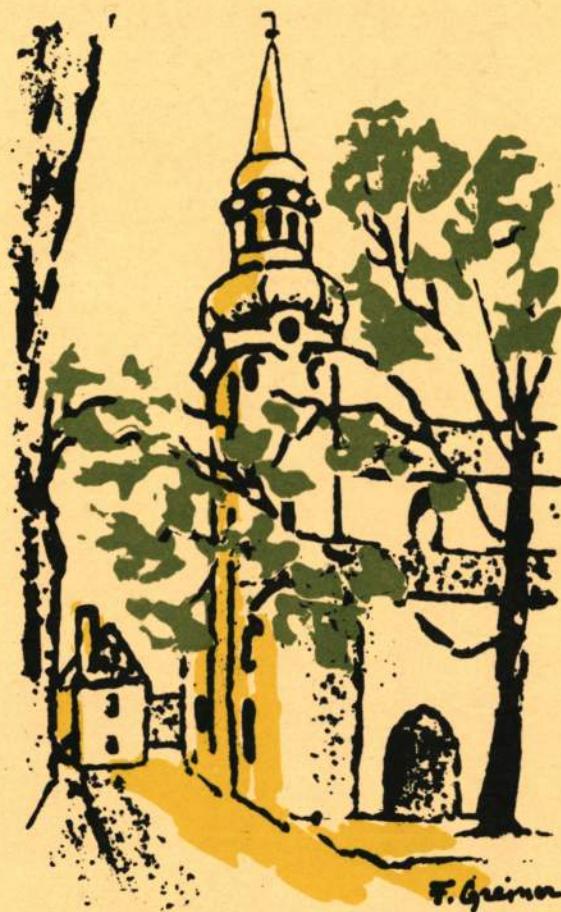


PROCLAMATION TODAY

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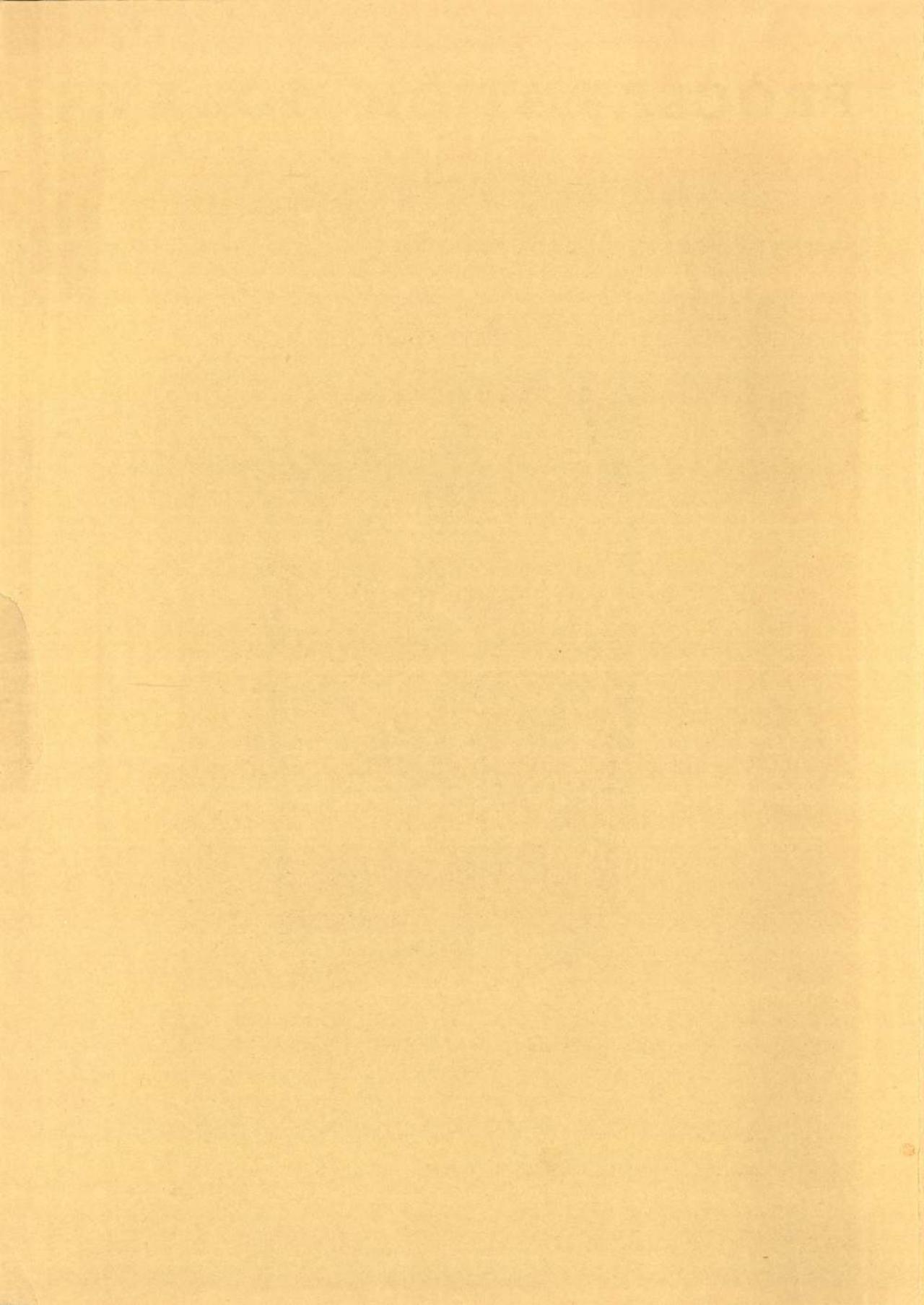
Conference of Lutheran Churches in Europe

Tallinn/USSR, 6-13 September 1980



The Lutheran Cathedral in Tallinn

"Pray one for another" (James 5:16)



Lutheran World Federation
Department of Church Cooperation

Report on the Conference of Lutheran
Churches in Europe

Tallinn, USSR, 6 - 13 September, 1980

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INTRODUCTION

RISTO LEHTONEN

"Proclamation Today" - this was the theme of the Conference of European Churches of the Lutheran World Federation held in Tallinn. A few words on the background to this choice of theme may be helpful. Recent Europe conferences of the LWF, and in particular the most recent of them in Liebfrauenberg, France, concentrated chiefly on questions of theological education and the further training of pastors. The choice of these themes was dictated by the conviction that if the church's ministry is to be developed in an intelligent way amid the rapid changes taking place in society in all parts of Europe today, the equipping of the church's ministers is a key task. The statements and decisions of these recent conferences are still of value today. The most important of them are included in the conference reports published by the LWF.

As we look back to the last of these conferences, four years ago, we can observe certain shifts in respect of the central issue. After Liebfrauenberg, it was clear that there was also need to investigate the question: What exactly is theological education for? A first step in this direction was made at the Bratislava consultation in May 1979, which examined the problems of training people for the ministry of the church in a secular society.

The Bratislava consultation can be seen as an intermediate step between the major Europe conferences. As that consultation was planned, it became obvious that there is much more in common between the contexts in which churches in Eastern and Western Europe carry out their ministry than is often imagined. Above all, the phenomenon of secularization, which is closely connected with industrialization and urbanization, is encountered in both parts of Europe, the West as well as the East. Thus the Bratislava consultation underlined the necessity for the churches in Europe today to give increased attention to the specific requirements of the secular society in which they have to bear their witness and perform their service with courage and joy.

It was against this background that the theme "Proclamation Today" was chosen for the Tallinn conference. This theme was to help participants to tackle the central questions of the church's mission. It was to lead us, therefore, to concentrate our attention on the church's most original and distinctive function as laid upon it by the Gospel.

Two emphases can clearly be identified in this theme. Firstly, it emphasizes the message itself and its "on-the-road" character. The Gospel is not a message unless it is passed on to people in a constantly changing world. The liberating and saving Gospel is not a static concept nor an abstract principle. It cannot be reduced to a historical document. On the contrary, the Gospel is a message which must be transmitted. Unless it goes out to people through proclamation, the Gospel is no longer the Gospel. God's

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saving and transforming power is at work in the proclaimed message of Jesus Christ.

Lutheran churches have been richly reminded in this Jubilee Year of the Augsburg Confession that God speaks and acts through his Word. God's speaking and acting are the essential content of Christian proclamation. Thus the proclaimed Word of God is constitutive for the church and at the same time is good news for the world. It is therefore impossible for the church to keep itself to itself. It has an inherent missionary character, which means it is committed to witness and service beyond its own constituency. Diaspora situations present it with a special challenge.

The church communicates this good news to the world not only by the preaching of the Word, not only by the Word made visible in the sacraments, but also by its life as a Christian community.

The second aspect of the theme "Proclamation Today" underlines the context of the church's mission. Churches in Europe live in different cultural, social and political situations. This results in a certain diversity in their proclamation. But what is common to them all is their conviction that no church can completely identify itself with or derive its agenda from any social order.

In Europe today, the churches are faced with a number of challenges which essentially determine their approach to proclamation, for example, the mood of the younger generation which is largely a generation without hope, one which longs to find meaning in life; the underprivileged, the unemployed, the poor, the oppressed, and those who fear the future; the enormous disparity between the rich European countries and the poor countries of the "Third World". Last but by no means least, proclamation is to be seen in the context of efforts for détente, peace and security in Europe. For example, the contribution of its churches to the implementation of the Helsinki Final Act and the success of the Madrid follow-up Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe is for them a high priority.

The Tallinn conference was in fact one link in a chain of conferences and consultations of Lutheran churches on various continents, all of which have been concerned with the church's mission. In 1980, representatives of the Lutheran churches in Africa met in Monrovia, Liberia, and in August of the same year those of the Lutheran churches in Latin America came together in Bogota, Colombia. In 1979 the Asian churches held a consultation with their partners from other continents. All these regional conferences dealt in various ways with the mission of the church.

In conclusion, I would like to express our deepest gratitude to Dr. Paul Hansen, who served for many years as the LWF Europe Secretary, for his energy and devotion in planning and guiding the work of the Tallinn conference. I would also like to renew our thanks to our host church, the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, particularly to its Archbishop, the Rt. Rev. Edgar Hark, and its General Secretary, the Rev. August Leepin, for their invaluable contribution to the arrangements for the conference and for their warm hospitality, all of which helped to ensure the success of the meeting.

LECTURE I

JAAKKO ELENIUS

THE CSCE - A MISSION FOR THE CHURCHES

1. From "cold war" to détente

After the second world war, all the countries of the world, with a few exceptions, were divided into two opposing blocs. International politics were characterized by the breaking off of diplomatic relations, propaganda, economic pressures, the speeding up of the arms race, demonstrations of military strength, and efforts to weaken the internal structures of other states. The struggle was still going on, without recourse to arms but in the form of the "cold war".

It was in this "cold war" atmosphere that the idea was first discussed of a collective security agreement to reduce the tension in relations between the states of Europe. The idea was put forward in 1954 by the then foreign minister of the Soviet Union, Wjatcheslav Molotov. During the sixties, the proposal was renewed on various occasions, sponsored by the socialist states. The western European states were at first against it, considering that a meeting would be solely to the advantage of the socialist states. Nevertheless, the statement adopted by the Conference of European Churches at its fifth assembly in 1967 included the following words: "... we suggest as a way towards greater reconciliation and a practical step towards ensuring peace a conference of the European heads of state. Such a conference might play an important rôle in limiting the formation of power blocs, in improving friendly relations and in encouraging greater cooperation in mastering the development problems of the 'Third World' ".

In the course of the seventies the attitude of the West became more favourable to the calling of a European conference on security, and the original concept of the scope of such a conference was broadened to include inter-state cooperation as well as security. A decisive step in favour of holding the security conference was the declaration of the NATO Council in 1970 agreeing that plans for it should go ahead on condition that in the meantime progress had been made in negotiations on the question of Germany and Berlin. In this favourable climate, certain important international agreements were reached, including the decision to resume the Vienna disarmament talks, and preparations could be started for the security conference. It was several years before real work began in the summer of 1973 on organizing the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Two years

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later, the heads of state of all the European countries except Albania, and also of the USA and Canada met in Helsinki and signed the Final Act of the CSCE on 1 August 1975.

The progress of the policy of détente was watched with great interest by the European churches, which had suffered with the peoples the horrors of the second world war and the anxieties of the "cold war". They welcomed the Final Act of Helsinki as a "sign of hope". The churches have since organized dozens if not hundreds of CSCE follow-up conferences where the contents of the Final Act have been analysed to see what the churches could do in a positive way to further the policy of détente. As an example, the Conference of European Churches, which naturally carries the chief responsibility of the churches in Europe for following up the CSCE, organized in July 1980 in Madrid its fourth post-Helsinki consultation on the theme, "Confidence-building among the Helsinki Signatory States - The Churches' Tasks". The previous post-Helsinki consultations of the CEC were held in 1975 (Buckow, GDR), 1977 (Gallneukirchen, Austria), and 1978 (Siofok, Hungary). Another initiative was the report of a Lutheran World Federation working group ("Findings of an LWF working group concerning contributions of Lutheran churches to the objectives of the CSCE") which was sent to all member churches in March 1980.

I should like briefly to describe the main lines of this important Helsinki Final Act and the evolution of détente in the past five years.

2. Contents of the Final Act of Helsinki

The Final Act of Helsinki consists of four parts, the so-called "baskets". In Section I, Questions relating to Security in Europe, 10 basic principles are enumerated which the participating states declare their intention to respect and put into practice. These principles are: (I) Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty; (II) Refraining from the threat or use of force; (III) Inviolability of frontiers; (IV) Territorial integrity of states; (V) Peaceful settlement of disputes; (VI) Non-intervention in internal affairs; (VII) Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief; (VIII) Equal rights and self-determination of peoples; (IX) Cooperation among states; (X) Fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law.

To establish an equilibrium among the diverse elements constituting the whole and to guard against biased interpretations of the catalogue of principles, the document adds the following indication: "All the principles set forth above are of primary significance and, accordingly, they will be equally and unreservedly applied, each of them being interpreted taking into account the others." This principle of interpretation is vital because without it, it would not have been possible to secure the agreement of all the signatory states on the declaration on principles.

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The first "basket" also includes the "Document on confidence-building measures and certain aspects of security and disarmament". The confidence-building measures agreed upon all relate to the military field, and include prior notification of major military manoeuvres and movements and exchange of observers at military manoeuvres. With regard to military détente, the participating states do not go beyond a statement of the usual maximum objective:

"The participating states recognize the interest of all of them in efforts aimed at lessening military confrontation and promoting disarmament which are designed to complement political détente in Europe and to strengthen their security. They are convinced of the necessity to take effective measures in these fields which by their scope and nature constitute steps towards the ultimate achievement of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, and which should result in strengthening peace and security throughout the world."

In the second section, Cooperation in the Field of Economics, of Science and Technology and of the Environment, the signatory states define in detail important existing areas for cooperation and declare that they are resolved to promote the development of cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual satisfaction. This section thus outlines the specific content of principle (IX), "Cooperation among States", and expresses the conviction of the signatory states that their efforts to promote cooperation in industry, commerce, science and technology, the environment and other areas of the economy will help to ensure peace and security in Europe and the world.

The third section of the Final Act, Cooperation in Humanitarian and Other Fields, sets out the objectives of this cooperation. The signatory states express their desire for increased cultural and educational exchange, broader dissemination of information, freer movement and contacts among persons, institutions and organizations, and the solution of humanitarian problems to contribute to the strengthening of peace and understanding among peoples and to the spiritual enrichment of the human personality.

In the fourth section of the Final Act, Follow-up to the Conference, the participants declare that they are resolved "in the period following the Conference, to pay due regard to... the provisions of the Final Act" and to implement them unilaterally, bilaterally and multilaterally. They also declare their resolve to continue the process initiated by the Conference "by proceeding to a thorough exchange of views both on the implementation of the provisions of the Final Act and of the tasks defined by the Conference, ... on the deepening of their mutual relations, the improvement of security and the development of cooperation in Europe, and the development of the process of détente in the future". To this end they decided to organize meetings among their representatives, and to hold the first such meeting in Belgrade in 1977.

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3. Characteristics of the Final Act of Helsinki

Here we need to look at certain aspects and characteristics of the Final Act of Helsinki which are of special significance from the theological point of view.

3.1. The preamble of the Final Act defines the supreme objective of the states participating in the CSCE as that of "promoting better relations among themselves and ensuring conditions in which their people can live in true and lasting peace free from any threat to or attempt against their security". This supreme aim is defined most comprehensively and concretely in the document. The Final Act as a whole reflects a dynamic and cooperative conception of peace. Peace and security not only imply absence of armed conflict and respect for the sovereignty of other states but also include cooperation for humanitarian purposes and human contacts.

3.2. The Final Act was drawn up on the consensus-principle, that is to say, a decision was made only if no participant categorically opposed it. This principle enabled smaller states to take an active part in the drafting of the Final Act. It is thus not the result of majority decisions, nor were its contents dictated by large powers or power blocs. Owing to the consensus-principle, the Final Act is a compromise. For the sake of the overriding peace objective, the participants were willing to renounce their specific demands. To this extent, the document is full of sacrifices.

3.3. The Final Act repeats in its 10 principles the current principles of international law laid down in the UN Charter and adds some new ones (principles III, IV, and VII). But the Final Act of the CSCE is not itself an international law document as understood by the law of treaties. It does not impose any specific treaty obligations on any of the participating states. It is therefore described as a political declaration of intent.

Varying legal concepts and interests of the participating states, and the emphasis laid on state sovereignty, make more far-reaching agreements having the force of international law unlikely. Therefore, as was the case in the drawing up of the Final Act, the implementation of the decisions and any future agreements will largely depend on the goodwill of the participants.

Although the Final Act is "only" a political declaration of intent and hence does not constitute international law in the strict sense, it has been accepted at the highest political level and has binding moral authority for all the signatories.

3.4. The basic principle which dominates all others is the principle of the sovereignty of states. But the signatory states accept a certain limitation of state sovereignty by accepting the VIIth principle (Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms) and by agreeing on the contents of the third "basket". Thus the individual with his needs and expectations is recognized as the object and bearer of the policy of détente.

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The endeavour of the Final Act to extend to the individual the application of principles resembling those of international law is unprecedented in an international document.

3.5. Détente is often described in the Final Act as a process in the course of which cooperation is increased, mutual understanding improved, security assured and contacts between people made closer. But the participating states have first to learn not to treat one another as enemies but increasingly as partners, and this involves a long and arduous process of cooperation in order to strengthen mutual trust and the feeling of security. We are only at the start of this process. Helsinki was only the beginning. By no means all the problems of Europe were solved at Helsinki. The CSCE was very promising, but its fruits will only be garnered when we have exercised the ancient virtue of patience.

3.6. As has already been said, the governments do not want to bear all the responsibility for the progress of détente. The Final Act stresses that détente is a process, and refers to the necessary role in it of non-governmental bodies. Principle IX, "Cooperation among states", says: "They (i.e. the participating states) confirm that governments, institutions, organizations and persons have a relevant and positive role to play in contributing towards the achievement of these aims of their cooperation". Therefore, the churches too are invited in the Final Act to contribute to the accomplishment of the moral and political aims of the CSCE.

4. Present prospects of détente

It is not easy to answer the question of how the decisions of the Final Act have been realized following the Helsinki and Belgrade conferences and how the policy of détente is progressing. We shall know more after the second Helsinki follow-up conference to take place in Madrid in November 1980 and for which we shall start preparing next week. But certain aspects can already be noted.

4.1. In the interval between Helsinki and Belgrade, there was a campaign of debate and information, mainly in the western press, over human rights. From this debate, we saw that the question of human rights represents a new element and a potential point of conflict in international relations, especially if the realization of this one CSCE principle is made the unique standard of progress in détente - which is contrary to the spirit of the Final Act. The debate also showed the public that there can be differing ideas of what is meant by human rights, and that quite apart from the social system, every society has to maintain a balance between them. As the discussion has gone on, it has been realized that various points of view have to be respected and that a right balance between individual rights and collective rights has to be found.

4.2. The time between Belgrade and Madrid has been marked by growing disquiet at the continuing armament of Europe. No progress has been made in relaxation

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of military tension and disarmament; and arms expenditure, the armed forces and the weapons of destruction threatening the European peoples have continued to grow. A special danger, and one which many churches are seriously concerned about, is constituted by the NATO decision to station new, rapid, medium-range nuclear missiles, difficult to counter, in certain western European countries.

The centre of gravity of the follow-up conference in Madrid will probably be this problem of military détente. In all probability, the meeting will discuss proposals (by the Soviet Union and France) for a European disarmament conference, and suggestions for promoting and making more specific the so-called confidence-building measures set out in the Final Act.

4.3. Since the follow-up meeting in Belgrade three meetings of experts have carried on the dialogue and cooperation. The Montreux meeting (31 October - 1 December 1978) discussed various proposals for improving existing methods for the peaceful settlement of conflicts. A meeting of experts on cooperation in the Mediterranean area took place in Valletta, Malta (13 February - 25 March 1979).

The "Scientists' Forum" (18 February - 3 March 1980), in which several hundred leading scientists from CSCE countries took part, met in Hamburg. They discussed the possibilities of international cooperation in alternative sources of energy, food and nutrition, medical research and the sociological and ecological effects of social developments. All three meetings of experts recommended that governments take their findings into account at the Madrid follow-up meeting.

4.4. The crisis in world politics has shown in recent months that the process of détente in our continent is closely connected with developments outside Europe. The world has shrunk to the dimensions of a village, and a crisis in a distant place casts its threatening shadow on the lives of people everywhere. Events in Afghanistan and Iran, even the presidential elections in the USA, are omnipresent realities on the road towards security and cooperation in Europe.

Altogether we see that, despite the many recent events which threaten continued détente, a multidimensional process has been set in motion, and that the CSCE will keep its value as a forum where all the political partners can meet and exchange their views.

5. The CSCE in the light of Lutheran theology

What is the assessment of the Final Act and the CSCE process from the point of view of Lutheran theology? Some fundamental aspects are the following:

5.1. The Final Act of Helsinki, seen as a political and moral document, belongs in the category that we Lutherans call "worldly rule", "the kingdom of this world", "iustitia civilis", "reason", "law", and so on. From this point of view, it can be said that "the worldly rulers" of the European

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nations, profoundly conscious - more so than many Christians or church leaders - of the threat to humanity and of their own responsibility, have conceived in the CSCE a peace system having in principle divine authority - at least until such time as a "more reasonable" system is constructed. The Final Act is a reflection of God's will, which is active in creation independently of the church and of Christianity, and the universal principles of which are made manifest to man through his experience and his understanding (*cognitio experimentalis legis*).

The churches and we Christians cannot bring any new light into the Final Act from our "Evangelium" or from the specific revelation of Christ. If we want to enhance its value and contribute to its realization - and that we should do - we must rely on everyday "worldly" arguments, on reason, experience and normal human ethics. For the church's preaching of the law, this means that any violation of a document established for the sake of peace and the defence of human dignity has to be condemned as a crime against God's law.

5.2. The above passage contains a peculiar element of Lutheran political ethics which has to be carefully brought out and noted. This is the confident belief in the ability and wisdom of men (that is to say, governments, politicians, diplomats, experts) to organize societies and a world order in which peace and justice can be ensured in an acceptable way. This confidence and the affirmation of it to "worldly rulers" could make a valuable contribution in a situation where people regard their political authorities as evil, are losing confidence in their own security systems, and where resignation and apathy are rife.

5.3. In confessing their faith in the triune God, who created, sustains and saves the world with his "left hand" and his "right hand", the worldly and the spiritual orders, Lutheran Christians are not thinking only of the attainment of religious freedom and freedom of conscience. Man was not created by God only for the sake of religion. As the CEC Executive Committee said in its message of April 1977 on the CSCE: "Since it is God's Will that men should be released from all their misery, the church is not acting outside its sphere but performing a sacred duty by helping to lessen man's wretchedness and construct conditions in which he can be glad to live."

5.4. Finally, let me mention a well-known personal point of view applying Lutheran theology to the question of human rights. Luther's blunt words written in the time of the peasant war - "Suffering, suffering, the Cross and the Cross, these and nothing else are the Christian's right" - denote that for a Christian of "human rights" always refers to the immediate neighbor with his needs and hardships. The Christian should always interpret human rights as the right to life of others before claiming them for himself.

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6. Détente and the challenge to the churches

The CSCE as a political process is first and foremost the responsibility of governments. But as we know, the governments recognize in the Final Act the "relevant and positive role" that non-governmental bodies have to play in achieving the CSCE aims. This recognition is a challenge to churches, Christian organizations and individual Christians.

The churches, of course, are in widely differing situations when they try to help promote détente. And it must be admitted that even the big churches or international church federations often have little possibility of influencing directly the course of international politics. In realistic terms, the church's effective sphere of action is mainly in the local congregations, at the lowest level, there indeed where throughout history the victims and suffering of war are to be found.

The following possible fields of work can be cited as conforming to Lutheran preaching of the law and as appropriate to all churches:

6.1. The churches can disseminate information. The citizen needs to be highly informed before he is ready for détente and cooperation. Unless he understands the objectives of political developments, the obstacles and complexities, he will feel threatened by minor crises and will react with hostility. He must be informed not only about rearmament and disarmament discussions but also about the security requirements and strategies of other nations or blocs. More knowledge means not only more suffering but also mutual understanding.

6.2. As almost all the church's post-Helsinki conferences have emphasized, the churches can introduce education for peace into their education and information programs at all levels. An LWF group meeting last winter listed the following subjects that might be introduced into the churches' peace education:

- training in the non-violent resolution of conflict and its application at all levels of human life;
- renunciation of all glorification of violence, incitement to hatred, e.g. the sale of war toys and war books;
- readiness to limit one's own use of consumer goods and lower one's standard of living; priority must be given to the life and survival of all people on earth when needs arise;
- training in acceptance of suffering and enduring prejudices and misunderstandings;
- stimulating willingness and ability to cooperate with those whose ideas differ from ours;
- training in an attitude of active solidarity with those who suffer;
- seeking to find information on important interrelations between economy, politics and armaments.

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6.3. The churches and their congregations can broaden their contacts and cooperation with one another. The CSCE Final Act offers such possibilities and a challenge to greater collaboration between Christians. The report of one of the sections at the CEC meeting on the CSCE consultation in Madrid indicates that inter-church cooperation has increased "considerably" in the past five years. In an address at this consultation, Prof. v. Baudissin pointed out that this network of church cooperation could play an important political role in times of crisis, because the churches could keep a "minimum dialogue" going when normal diplomatic channels were blocked.

6.4. It is the right and even the duty of the churches in particular situations to address initiatives and appeals to the "worldly rulers" on questions of world politics. They do not necessarily have to make public statements but can act through personal contacts.

6.5. In the spirit of Helsinki, the churches can step up existing efforts for cooperation in the field of theological research between those in the east and the west. The oft-mooted idea of a Peace Academy of the CSCE countries for the purpose of informing and stimulating the churches to peace activities, should not be forgotten.

7. What détente means for the churches

The CSCE represents not only a challenge and an obligation for the churches. The Final Act of Helsinki, and the process of détente, if it goes forward, come also as a gift to the churches which we should gratefully accept.

7.1. It is only in an atmosphere of peace and détente that church cooperation, ecumenical meetings, contacts between Christians and, in general, the entire mission of the church are possible. Peaceful conditions are likewise indispensable if the churches are to maintain and develop their activities within their own social systems in west and east.

7.2. By calling on the churches and their members for an important effort towards détente, the CSCE has properly and legitimately shown the churches that nowadays they cannot confine their activities to the sphere of private life and religious functions. The churches have undoubtedly been inspired and stimulated by the CSCE to greater activity in the realm of political ethics.

7.3. In conclusion, it can be said that the Final Act of Helsinki delivers a very clear directive to the Lutheran churches to exercise the "watchman function" which is theirs in society. The Final Act represents for us the newest text for our social preaching of the law. With it in hand, we can judge objectively whether the signatories have done what they promised. And with its aid, the churches and church members can also look honestly and critically at themselves and continue to ask what they themselves are doing to promote the high ideals of the Final Act.

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Questions for discussion:

1. How are we training ourselves for peace? Can you give concrete examples? What have you learned from them?
2. What is most important today in order that our witness for peace, may help to bring peace to those who long for it but who do not know God's promise of peace?
3. Can the peace greeting of the Bible still be used to affirm peace and make it effective?
4. How can we make clear that we are called by the Gospel of peace, to work for peace among people, without losing our witness for peace in our work for peace?
Alternatively, how can we voice the Gospel of peace in the course of our work for peace? Can you give any examples of this?
5. What form might an alternative system of security with the non-violent resolution of conflicts take?

LECTURE · II

ANDRE DUMAS

THE CONTEXT OF PROCLAMATION: THE SPIRITUAL AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN EUROPE

Introduction: The message and the context

Proclamation is the announcing of the good news of God's coming to men in Jesus Christ, as foretold by the prophets who gave the substance of the message, namely the Christ, and as seen and felt by the apostles who gave it its reality, namely Jesus. The good news is that God exists for men, refuting the conception of God as indifferent, egocentric, useless and naive, and that men exist for him, thus refuting also the conception of man as arrogant or abandoned. Unless proclamation is this joyful, astonishing and unifying message, it becomes a mere repetition of outworn forms, or a judgemental, bitter and hostile assessment of humanity.

Proclamation is therefore dependent to a large extent upon a proper understanding of the context in which it is made. Otherwise it is irrelevant, unreal, abstract, too general. The wonderful thing about the scriptures is that they are always explicit, concrete, full of timely and striking details. Nevertheless, they speak to the specific context and do not merely reflect it. God himself comes to men. The scriptures are not simply words addressed by men to men, spoken as if God had not transformed the horizon of their nature and history. Without context, proclamation would be an escape into religion. And without the coming of a new message, the context would become an impious conformism.

If in our church we were to be fundamentally hostile to our context, for example to the state, we would be in danger of lapsing into either an inward-looking pietism or an outward-looking expectation of the apocalypse. If on the other hand our church takes a positive attitude of principle towards its context, we shall be in danger of falling into either blind loyalty or sterile solidarity. The church is always confronted by these two dangers, which deprive us of that Christian liberty which is so vital for human liberty. That is why in the Bible we are told we must forget neither the Christian submission to authority taught in Romans 13 nor the breaking in of Christian revelation. The road of Christian freedom is never preordained. We have to examine the facts, ask questions, discuss, and act, critically and positively. The context faces us with a question, while the Gospel message compels us. A living tension always exists between the two.

ANDRE DUMAS

The 16th century Reformation was the living encounter with a message - the message of justification by faith, which liberates from the discouragement of legalism and the weakness of scepticism, a message given in the context of oppressed and troubled consciences, of a European Christianity formalized in a hierarchical system. With this as an example, what is today's message of good news in our European context?

I. Europe

1. The countries of Europe have many things in common, for instance old national traditions, successive experiences of Christianity, then the liberation of certain aspects of life from the tutelage of the churches, and now a more private and personal Christianity which is in danger of becoming a marginal feature of society, regarded as a means of identification surviving from the past rather than as a ferment for the present. Furthermore, Europe is no longer the hub of the world; the centre of gravity has moved from the Mediterranean to the North Sea, then to the Atlantic, and now to the Persian Gulf and the Pacific.
2. Europe is split up in various ways. Some of its divisions go back to old national territorial boundaries, or to changes in sovereignty, or to different confessional traditions; others of more recent date result from opposing political and economic systems, differing on the two questions of single-party democracy or pluralism, and of planned economy versus free enterprise. Because of these multiple divisions, Europe today appears more fractured than ever before. We are like a big family whose members are estranged from one another.
3. It is in Europe that the policy of détente is being explored (Helsinki 1975, Belgrade 1977, Madrid 1980). But what does détente mean, what are its causes and its consequences? Is it that the memory of the devastation wrought by the great European wars feeds the longing for peace? Is the long-term aim to stabilize the existing territorial and ideological boundaries of Europe, leaving the rest of the world to competition and conflict? Is the policy of détente merely one of two temporary tactics, the alternative being to gain ground wherever the opportunity arises? In short, what is the connection between détente, balance of power and peace?
4. Europe is losing its influence in the world, demographically, economically and politically. We all belong to countries which carried more weight in the past than now. Is this situation the cause of a certain withdrawal, accentuated by the fact that people are often more strongly attached to their provincial and local roots than to centralized forms of technocratic and bureaucratic state power? But this effacement fails to recognize our very rich and influential common culture. We are a cultural giant but a political dwarf! How can we resolve this dilemma? I would identify four factors in the European situation: a common development from earliest times, numerous cleavages, peace restored but with a residue of mistrust, and finally a sense of uneasiness in the relation between the cultural and the

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political realms.

II. The cultural and spiritual situation in Europe

The words "cultural" and "spiritual" are not synonymous, although both apply to the inner symbolic life of humanity and society as distinct from their technical and productive life. For the Christian, spiritual refers to the continual operation among us of God's Holy Spirit, while cultural refers to man's works of imagination and art without any connotation of divine transcendence. Despite this important distinction the two words belong together: they both signify that man does not live by bread alone but by words, not by production alone but also by spiritual elements, not only by the visible but also by invisible values.

Here we need to define somewhat the meaning of secularization. First of all, I consider secularization as the opposite of clericalism. All citizens are equal irrespective of their religious faith. It is neither an advantage nor a disadvantage to be a Christian. Faith is thus really free. We are in favour of this secularization. It is the theological echo of divine providence which is for all people without limitations and without any confusion of the Gospel message with worldly power. But if spiritual realities are seen as false and illusory, secularization can also mean the erection of new barriers. In that case faith is to some extent a social disadvantage. It would be well for us to maintain the distinction between these two different senses of secularization, so as to make it plain at all times that the church of Jesus Christ does not exist for the sake of its own power but for the universal freedom of conscience of all humanity.

1. Ideologies and nihilism

If we understand by ideology a world view based on rational thinking, which mobilizes activists and the masses in order to transform the future of society, we see that since the 18th century, i.e. after the religious wars of the 16th century and the great forms of orthodoxy established in the 17th century, Europe has been a great production centre of ideologies: toleration and rationalism, liberalism and socialism, democracy and revolution. Today, however, we detect everywhere a hidden nihilism among people, a suspicion that ideological talk masks an orthodox system behind which everything is rigid and unchanged. This nihilism is often a hidden, ironic and at times despairing reaction to the feeling that we have swallowed too many fine words which have become mere slogans.

2. Private life and individualism

We see everywhere a withdrawal into the private sphere of life, and this to some extent explains a certain revival of religious feeling; for we all know in our inmost hearts that truth or falsehood, compassion or

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indifference, peace or anger arise from within us and can never be the automatic result of the social system, whether a consumer society or a planned production society. This return to the private side of life is in this respect a rediscovery of personal values. Private life, however, does not mean a solitary or selfish life. The message of the Bible, addressed to individual faith, aims always at creating a body of believers, a pilgrim people, the church as the body of Jesus Christ. How can this conviction help us now to combine private life and social commitment, the contemplative life with struggle, inwardness with incarnation?

3. The liberalizing of morals and the unreliability of feelings

The positive aspect of what is called the liberalizing of morals is that it attacks all taboos and hypocrisies. For example, thanks to scientific progress, the present generation understands better how to avoid having unwanted children. Marriages are no longer arranged between families; sexuality can be talked about openly; private life is less supervised and regulated by society. There is more toleration for variations in behaviour, less condemnation, and certainly more freedom and compassion.

But along with this liberalization of morals there has come an increased instability in feelings. People's feelings are not so permanent and durable; instead of reaching full expression, they are often frustrated, fluctuating. Yet really profound feelings can only flower in the fullness and strength of permanence.

How do our churches face up to these alternatives: a true freedom without pretence, or liberation which is weak and fragile? How can we proclaim the grace which binds and unites human beings, when under law alone we are suffocated while with freedom alone we are isolated and abandoned?

4. What is culture?

The word "culture" has taken on enormous dimensions in our industrial urban societies where it is often a kind of counterpoise in the existence of people whose rhythm of life has been broken and whose work has been made less interesting and more monotonous by the introduction of industrial techniques. But is not this culture, in the forms imposed on it by social conformity, taking too large a place in people's non-working lives? Any true culture brings people the joy of discovering and realizing themselves. Culture is in this respect allied to religious worship: the surprise of a shared joy, so that the working week is brightened by the sabbath light of Sunday when people do not work but can contemplate, receive, accept and bless.

How can the acts of worship in our various societies serve the need for culture of those around us, so that worship and culture draw nourishment from one another? Worship for the religious life and culture for everyday life are both moments of freedom and wonderment.

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III. The economic and political situation in Europe

1. Industrialization and the economic crisis

Over the past century, the traditional rural and village society has everywhere in Europe changed into an industrial and urban society. The last stage of this development has been what sociologists call the growth of the tertiary sector - administration, services, and the offer of what I have called above culture.

But now this social system is everywhere in a state of crisis: the crisis of unemployment because the means of production exceed the potential market; the crisis of the balance of payments, because imported raw materials for industry are too costly; the crisis of education, because a qualified person can no longer be guaranteed an appropriate job on the completion of training; the crisis of health and social services, because their costs rise faster than productivity, and finally the crisis of the cities, overcrowded with people who are leaving the countryside.

Are these crises attributable to the character of our two different economic systems: one, a crisis of uncontrolled capitalism exclusively motivated by profit, the other a crisis of bureaucratic socialism paralyzed by its rigidity? Or are they perhaps due to the fact that Europe, with its advanced industrial infrastructures, has not enough raw materials of its own? Or have we actually here a world crisis, because unbridled growth cannot go on indefinitely in a world with finite resources?

One thing is undeniable: we have to give up the dream of ever-increasing industrialization for ever-new markets and an ever-rising standard of living. We are facing a declining rate of growth, indebtedness and inflation, and an immense imbalance between three separate zones: the original industrialized countries which have an excess of productive capacity and consequently unemployment; the newly rich countries with an excess of investment capital; and the countries without competitive industries, without capital, which are becoming poorer, while their populations will continue to increase until the end of the century.

What kind of solution does the church see for this worldwide crisis? What does the right to work mean at a time of increasing unemployment? What do we believe is the cause of the crisis? And what can we do to prevent over-optimism giving way to a mood of impending catastrophe?

2. Arms and mistrust

In spite of this economic crisis which threatens living standards, the arms race is accelerating. The world is spending a million dollars a minute on arms. There is growing mutual mistrust: the western European countries are deeply disturbed at the present deployment of SS 20 type rockets and the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet troops, while eastern

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Europe is worried about the planned basing of Pershing II missiles and the increasing armament of the west, including the so-called neutron bomb. Why is it that the race for offensive and defensive weapons is being escalated now, at a time when two-thirds of the world's people are threatened with starvation and when it had been expected that the Helsinki Conference would lead to much greater international security, an expansion of international trade, and freer circulation of ideas and of people? Each side lays the blame on the other. After a certain balance of forces, there is new disappointment over the failure of détente and the impossibility of understanding each other's motives. The climate is not exactly one of cold war or ideological crusade, but of general suspicion.

What can the churches do to encourage objectivity rather than idealism, explanation rather than accusation, and thus work for genuine reduction in armaments?

In this context of general mistrust of all great hopes, we have to think also of the political situation. Is there any future for social pluralism in societies which make no provision for political change? How can our churches help to install confidence instead of mistrust?

3. Sudden changes and the search for roots

We have seen many real changes, and also unfulfilled promises. Now we feel the need for stability and a return to old traditions - to nature, to folklore, to earlier life-styles, to family life, and also to confessional orthodoxy. People who have lost their roots are looking for their identity. There are revivals, for example, in Islam and Judaism which astonish people who had believed they were bound to disappear in the general modern movement of rationalism and universalism. People are now fighting for the right to be different, to have again a specific identity formed throughout a long history and not to be sacrificed to the new tendency to pour everything into a uniform mould. Thus, curiously, the utopian dream of a completely new future has given way to the search for roots; a backward-looking nostalgia has taken the place of an optimistic forecasting of the future.

Christians know the importance for their faith of the remembrance of earlier times, because our own roots are in the history of the people of Israel, chosen by God to live out a faith specific to them yet an example to all nations. Above all, our faith is based on the coming of Jesus Christ and on his cross and resurrection. Thus we know that memory is not a past which estranges but roots which nourish. But we do not want this memory of otherness to constitute a purely archaic and legendary separation, a heritage which merely confers a special identity. The faith is a treasure offered to all people, across all barriers of nationality, race, type of government, culture and so also of religion when that serves primarily as a force of social cohesion. How then can we use our own past not as an opiate or a way of satisfying our need for identity but as a ferment

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and a missionary gift?

4. A sober and perhaps disillusioned younger generation

Youth quickly changes. In western Europe, for instance, the present generation has little in common with that of 1968. Young people no longer expect life to get easier and easier in a consumer society. They are afraid of not finding a job, afraid of increasing suspicion between the power blocs and of the growing poverty in the world. They are largely alienated from politics and are sceptical of the establishment - the state, the church, marriage. They want to keep the family small so that the wife as well as the husband can have an active occupation outside the home. They aim also to be more self-supporting, less dependent on parents and society. And the church they want is one in which each member plays an active role; they do not want to be mere consumers of an overly institutionalized religion with which they will gradually become bored and fed up.

There are some very positive aspects to this sober way of thinking by young people. They have no illusions about the new worlds which they were promised; they no longer dream so much of exotic escapes to other continents which used to seem so much more mobile and vital than Europe. But there is also a danger of a critical disillusionment which looks with suspicion at everything outside the experience of very small groups. So it commonly happens that parents who were very active in the great struggles and deeply committed have children who look primarily for personal happiness, however precarious and anxiety-ridden.

Religious faith certainly does not mean an idealistic and illusory view of human nature; neither does it mean being resigned to expect nothing for the world as a whole. It is a sober enchantment, a patient enthusiasm, a daily passion. Is the church in contact with youth's aspirations? What message are we proclaiming, as we approach the end of the millennium to a Europe which believed it could solve all its problems by technology and now sees the mounting dangers and threats?

IV. What Christians have to proclaim to Europe today

The considerations which follow are based on the three dimensions of understanding and of the Christian life spoken of by Paul in I Corinthians 13:13 - faith, hope and love.

1. Faith, a personal assurance

For many people today, religious faith is a personal opinion, a curiosity, a sign of people's weakness and inability to be guided by the discoveries of science and to come to terms with the joys and woes of life. They judge it as credulity and lack of courage. Our present situation is different from that of the Reformation period of the 16th century, when

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everyone sought salvation and the fundamental question was how to obtain it from God. Today the antithesis is not between works and grace, but between faith and atheism.

I believe our proclamation must insist upon the personal aspect of faith, which is one of the essential proofs of our freedom. Precisely because faith cannot be proved like scientific facts, nor is it tentative like psychology, it is a free act of the will. It is the answer we give to God's question: Who do you say that I am? Fortified by faith, a person can take the risk of being different. To have faith is to believe that God speaks to us and to me personally, so that I am no longer a servant or a spectator but choose to put my trust in that faith and let it guide my whole life. My faith convinces me that neither determinism nor chaos rules the world, but that the creation is good, while it is also threatened unless I strive against darkness and futility as God himself strove in creating and giving the world a name, as the first chapter of Genesis tells us. My faith convinces me that in the midst of history there is redemption in Jesus Christ, and not merely enthusiasm for technology and ideology, doomed to end in disappointment and disillusion, for redemption is the gift of liberation from remorse and the pangs of conscience. It is also reconciliation between those who have good reason to distrust each other. Redemption means salvation not by evasion and lies but by forgiveness and truth. Finally, my faith tells me that neither continual progress nor mortal catastrophe is to come but God's Kingdom. We receive and manifest signs of this Kingdom which penetrate the darkness.

Thus faith is not the opposite of freedom but gives it an example and a foundation. We humans are free just because we can always have faith - without being credulous or fanatical - a confidence which, though afflicted by trials is not destroyed. Tenacious faith is therefore not stubborn narrow-mindedness but lasting assurance.

2. Hope, a daily new beginning and a cosmic expectation

One of the most striking aspects of the Bible is the fact that it both relates very ordinary stories in which we are directly concerned with our neighbour, and conveys a global message, the Apocalypse echoing the Book of Genesis. These are two essential aspects. If we do not respond to the needs of our neighbour, we sacrifice the opportunities of the present for the sake of a fictitious future. We fall victim to a messianism of the future, forgetting the practical love of our neighbour that is called for right now. We have a long-term program of ecumenism but are not rooted in congregational life. Lacking a wide and cosmic horizon, we forget that Jesus Christ is not only someone who lived fully his individual encounters, but is also the one whom the New Testament calls the Lord of all creation, its ground and fulfilment. Christian hope is therefore an impulse toward our neighbour, listening, comforting him, perhaps above all restoring his confidence in the unique value of his personal existence. At the same time it is an all-embracing conviction concerning the destiny of the universe, which will not be a triumph followed by decline, but a universe which,

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groaning, awaits the new creation which begins with Easter and which the church proclaims to the whole world in all its freshness and truth.

These two dimensions of hope - the everyday and the cosmic - are vital for our proclamation in Europe today. The church of Jesus Christ must be not only a place where there are spontaneous human contacts but also an organization where people can be enthused by and take action on all these great questions which concern the community as a whole. Critics of the church as an institution think it is too cold, lacking in spontaneity and warmth, too narrow, not sufficiently universal in its radiation. Our proclamation then, faithful to the example of the New Testament, must be both personal, subtle and sensitive, and also very collective, political and clear. The hope we find in Jesus Christ fortifies us in these two dimensions, both of which are needed to give the breath of life to the whole person, enabling people to steer a course between an exaggerated inwardness and over-activity. In that way the church can be ferment for the whole of society, in both its personal relations and its more distant goals.

3. Love, the goal and framework of life

Everyone hopes to love and to be loved. Only love can conquer inward insecurity and outward loneliness. St. Paul says that the greatest thing in life is love; for there will be no need of faith when we shall know as we are known, and no need of hope when fulfilment takes the place of expectation. The greatest and most lasting thing is therefore love, both in this present life and in the Kingdom of God that is to come. It is love also which is common to God and humanity, for God's love for humanity in Jesus Christ, with its long and turbulent but loving history, which is the unbroken thread running through biblical revelation, is the fundamental good news in all proclamation.

Two objections may be raised: what can love do when collectivities confront one another and all that counts is competing ideologies, the balance of forces and conflicting interests? Is love, like peace which is on everyone's lips, not just a fine sentiment which serves only to mask the bitterness of conflict and power politics? Love would then merely be an idealistic ideology, no different from the scientific, imperialist or productivity ideologies of others.

The second objection is even more serious. What is to be done when love has failed, when an individual or a country is full of disappointments, sufferings and regrets, of relativism, and worldly wisdom and realism, and there is no more love in people's hearts because history is for them not a pretty love story but a bitter struggle.

At the heart of Christian proclamation is not a blaze of love but the cross of Jesus Christ, God persisting in his love for humanity even when there is no love between people but rather a struggle for power

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and then the anguish of lost love. Therefore to preach Christ crucified is not to proclaim a love which existed before conflict but a love which endures throughout conflicts, a love then which has no illusions about the reality of opposing forces and the memory of suffering, but which is not stayed by mistrust and disappointment but goes forward to re-discovery and resurrection - just as history did not stop at Good Friday but went on to the renewal of Easter.

There are two commoner words I might have used instead of love, the words "justice" and "peace". I chose to use the word "love" because it calls for a response from us all. To love without being loved, or to be loved without loving, is nothing. It is even one of the most striking definitions of unhappiness. Love is bound to be both an impulse and an exchange; it is a reciprocal movement and a living stream. When we talk of justice and peace, our primary purpose is sometimes to accuse someone else whom we consider guilty of injustice and fomenting war. Of course we need justice, for without it some enjoy privileges, sometimes thoughtlessly, sometimes with shame, while others are weighed down by suffering and envy. Without justice there can be no open relations between individuals and societies. Of course we also need peace, for arms are the sign of suspicion and not of strength. When there is no peace, countries waste for the sake of false prestige and out of genuine fear resources which could be used to feed people, to promote justice and culture. But even more than justice and peace, love is the basic good news of the Gospel for humanity and for peoples. The church need not be ashamed to proclaim love, to practise love, and to long for love.

Conclusion: "Unblocking" Europe

We have been describing in broad outline the European context of our proclamation. I should like to mention two final points.

Our continent badly needs security, that is, we need to know that we are not living under threat from outside or with internal unrest. We have had political and ideological crises and now we have an economic crisis: our people are longing for job-security, for security in their emotional life, for the right to profess their faith in security, and naturally for international security. In the Bible, the word security, or safety, is always used in a positive sense, for God knows how frail we are and that we cannot live in fear; that is why Jesus Christ is called the shepherd, who comes to reassure the sheep (John 10). But the need for truth is just as vital. A security based on lies, on too great a discrepancy between what is said and what is done, would be a prison - even though a peaceful one. I have in mind here all our societies. Truth comprises witness, judgment, criticism, and also strength, trust and mutual honesty. Thus Jesus Christ is called the light of the world, guiding it to life (John 8:12).

What can we do to give Europe both security and truth?

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Questions:

- 1) How can we bring the context into our proclamation without lapsing into a purely sociological analysis and forgetting the message?
- 2) Do you think the countries of Europe have more things in common than things that divide them?
- 3) What is the relation between the policy of détente and the stabilization of zones of influence and the lessening of mutual suspicion?
- 4) Is our time one of ideological obsession or of a secret nihilism? How can the Gospel help to counter manicheism and scepticism?
- 5) Are the private lives of Europeans suffocating under taboos, or have they lost their way through too much permissiveness?
- 6) What do we think of cultural policies? Are people becoming more clear-sighted or are they stuck in conformity to catchwords and fashions?
- 7) What do we think are the causes of the latest economic crisis and what possible solutions do we see?
- 8) What are in our view the causes of the new armaments race, and what can we do to counter them?
- 9) What about youth in themselves, and in particular their relation to the churches?
- 10) Is faith seen as a restriction on or as a source of human freedom?
- 11) Can Christian hope triumph over illusions and disappointments?
- 12) What does love mean in a world of conflict?
- 13) How can we combine truth with security?

LECTURE III

J. P. BOENDERMAKER

PROCLAMATION IN LIGHT OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION

Proclamation, Bible, Confession

Why is there a Lutheran Confession? Because the majority in the church at that time did not realize that this "heretical" movement's fundamental concern was simply the confession of the prophets, apostles and evangelists, i.e. the basic catholicity of the church. Basically, therefore, "proclamation in the light of the Lutheran Confession" can only be the biblical message, preaching in the light of holy scripture. In theory that goes without saying, but in practice it is not so simple. How does this work out in our own church? Of course there is preaching and it is still supposed to be biblical exegesis. So it is not surprising if questions are constantly arising from the homiletic side, precisely those questions which cause us the most uneasiness and which confront us again and again with the need for hermeneutical considerations. Furthermore, however, Lutherans tend to extract a few outstanding points from the scripture such as "sola fide, sola gratia", "the Law and the Gospel", "justification", and then to develop them - of course in the name of Luther and of the Lutheran Confession. These matters are clearly most important, but it is always dangerous to take the findings of hard work and reverent exegesis and to use them simply as our initial starting-point. That is making things easier for ourselves than the Reformers ever did.

Certainly, therefore, we have constantly to tackle exegesis and hermeneutics afresh, and the whole of this introduction is by way of being an apology for my coming before you with these difficult hermeneutic problems. There is no way round this, for, however true it is that the Reformation confession is itself the fruit of faithful listening to the message of the Bible, this listening and fidelity are to be achieved anew again and again.

In doing so we shall not be able to disregard the hermeneutical discoveries of the Reformers; for in these rediscoveries of the claritas scripturae, decisions were made which we cannot and indeed have no wish to ignore. There is still a great deal to be said, too, about the nature of these decisions, but then the inescapable question immediately arises as to whether we still stand on the ground and soil of the Bible in the same way the Reformers did, not to speak of the biblical exegesis of the early Christians.

In view of the extent to which shifts have taken place in our knowledge

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and insight, do we not have simply to admit that this is not the case?

Among those who simply refuse to admit this are those anxious Christians who take refuge in a fundamentalist fortress which is poles apart from that joyous liberty characteristic of the Reformers. It is wrong and indeed impossible for us simply to reject the scientific achievements of past centuries. Our debt to these critical studies is too great for that, however many mistakes may also have been made in this area and however many problems they have set us. In my own country, this has repeatedly led to divisions in the church. Because of the long free church tradition, it is a much more obvious phenomenon in my country than in many other places, but there is surely a lesson to be learned from the fact that in the first place it was thorny questions of this kind which led to this result. Among the Lutherans, things had already reached this pass by the end of the 18th century through the influence of German rationalism. We had to wait until 1952 for reunion to take place! In 1886 the Calvinists followed suit and in the large church which came into existence as a result, a further smaller schism came about in 1926, which did not last as long however. The bone of contention was the historicity of the Bible, including that of the Genesis story! Many who hear of this today find it hard to suppress a faint smile, but the smile dies away when we read the utterly self-assured summary of the position by Gunkel in the RGG dictionary as recently as 1927: "The replacement of 'Biblical theology' by the 'history of the religion of Israel', as experienced by our generation, is explained by the fact that the spirit of historical research is now beginning to take the place of the doctrine of inspiration. After all this, we may expect the discipline in the not too-distant future to take the form of the 'history of the Israelite religion' " (RGG² I, *) col. 1089-1091). So it was that there was also talk then of "the history of the primitive Christian religion". Gunkel, moreover, was mistaken. The question of a "biblical theology" (the term itself is not found on the lips of the Reformers but first occurs in Spener!) was increasingly raised. (Cf. H.J. Kraus, Die biblische Theologie, ihre Geschichte und Problematik, Neukirchen 1970. For this reference and the above quotations, I am indebted to my colleague in Amsterdam, Dr. F.H. Breukelman.)

Most of us had to wrestle with this and similar material in the course of our basic theological studies, and of course this is still to some extent the case today. In itself this is no bad thing, provided one realizes the limitations of this approach. Unfortunately, people all too often fail to do so.

If no advance is made beyond this approach, it is noticeable at once how little use it is for preaching. The liberating effect, for example, of realizing that it is no longer necessary to believe that the world was created in six days, of being able to identify the sources of these Old Testament concepts, indeed, of seeing that this poetic account of the creation is completely misunderstood if it is regarded as a lesson in physics, - this liberating effect, necessary as it was, came in time to prompt no more than a response of "so what?".

*) RGG² I (Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, second edition, Tübingen, 1927 ff., Vol.I).

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For many the Bible had been and is still being taken to pieces, like grandad's watch. They know what the pieces are and what they are made of; the only thing is that the watch doesn't tick any more! I still detect something of this rather morose mood in John Reumann's contribution to the LWF Report of June 1980 on the Confessio Augustana, entitled "The Augsburg Confession in the Light of Exegesis", p.9f. I quote (p.10): Our knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible has increased enormously since 1530 and our view of the 'canon' has radically altered. In many respects the Reformers were as biblical exegetes closer to medieval thinking than we are, for whom the enlightenment represents the great watershed. On the other hand, oddly enough, we stand closer to the Semitic thought of the ancient East by which the Old Testament as well as the New were so largely influenced, thanks to our modern discoveries. In Marburg for example, would Luther have found it possible to stress the words 'This is my body' if he had realized that in Aramaic this sentence has no verb? In hermeneutics today we work more and more on an interconfessional or supraconfessional level. We speak of the "beginnings of Christianity" not of "biblical theology". We see more unity in the New Testament. We emphasize human existence and anthropological statements more strongly than the theological ones (in the narrower sense) and at every step and turn we encounter eschatology. "Sola scriptura" is today supplied with a question mark or understood as "prima scriptura".

It is not my intention to enter into all the positions which are taken here. Just a few remarks, all the same. It must be said right away that to say these things out loud and without hedging takes courage. People do not always thank you for saying what many are thinking! This alone enhances the value of this paper. Next remark: my comment just now, to the effect that we are more alive today than we used to be to the Semitic world of thought of the Bible, is very important, even though in Luther himself we already find a great deal more openness for this than in many later exegetes. I am therefore not as certain as I may have sounded on this matter of the "est" at Marburg! Luther may very well have assumed it; but it would probably have made very little difference to his standpoint, since this was not one forced on him by the text but was derived from his awareness of the practical character of the word of God. And this itself was in turn related to his knowledge of the Hebrew language. He had learned to make a clear distinction between amar and dabar and sensed that he was dealing here with a key word. The fact that in the subsequent effects of the idea of presence old theological difficulties again gave rise to new theological difficulties is sad enough but it is something quite different. But to come now to the last part of this quotation: still Gunkel, or Gunkel once again! Is there really no other possibility, no new productive way, no third possibility? Is it really a choice between biblicism and Gunkel?!

I cannot believe, do not want to believe, that we have to choose between these two alternatives. But neither do I make any claim to offer a ready-made solution. But obviously I would not have developed this theme in this direction, had I not entertained some hope of our finding together a way out of this dilemma. Before attempting this, however, something more must be said first about Reformation hermeneutics, not just because this cannot indeed

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be avoided but also because I believe that we can find there analogies for new possibilities.

Historical perspective

a) Confessional documents

We shall comb the Confessio Augustana in vain for a section on the scriptures. No argument is provided in it for taking the Bible as the norm. Only in the preface do we find any reference to it but nothing about hermeneutic principles. The same is true of the Apology, Luther's Catechisms, and his Schmalkald Articles. This was also pointed out by Schlink in his Theology of the Confessional Documents (Munich 1946, p.23f.) with a note of surprise; he emphasized that this omission was certainly not to be attributed to naivety. There was no need to speak of the normativity of the Bible; that was assumed. But it was already five years since Luther himself had his difficult discussion with Erasmus, in which what was ultimately at issue was not so much the liberum arbitrium as the fundamental question of the claritas scripturae! In other words, is scripture itself direct revelation or is it not? There is nothing about this in the Confessio Augustana, however much the proof texts implicitly tell us about the standpoint of the Reformers. Only in the Epitome do we find an explicit affirmation that the scripture is judex, regula and norma (The Book of Concord, p.464, 503f.).

There are, of course, incidental statements from which much can be deduced. An impressive demonstration of this is provided by Holsten Fagerberg in his Theology of the Confessional Documents 1529-1537 (Göttingen 1965, p.14f.). But in the actual confession these prolegomena are omitted. They have already been assumed; the message has been heard and now it must be declared on the ground of the conscience, firmly anchored in the message of the scriptures. This, in the last analysis, is the source of reformation.

b) Luther

All the essentials of his new discovery were derived by Luther from a new understanding of the Bible. There is no need for me to repeat here what every Lutheran knows. I shall simply refer to some aspects which are perhaps less familiar.

The history of the Reformation is usually told as if it were primarily a struggle with Rome, and this all too understandable. It could also be described differently, namely as a social movement concerned in all aspects with politics and social problems. It is good that we are now aware of this, too. But the Reformation could also be described as an educational reform; we see this only as a secondary aspect but it is quite clear from Luther's correspondence, for example, that this aspect was for him again and again the most immediate one. A lasting reform could only come about through study and for Luther that meant, above all, study of the scriptures.

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In a letter to Staupitz as early as 30th May 1518, the weight attached by Luther to linguistic and factual knowledge is already quite obvious. He writes that he has only now come to see how mistaken the phrase poenitentiam agere (= to do penance) is, since the original text refers to an alteration of a person's entire attitude, i.e. metanoia.

Since 1516 he had been using the Annotationes of Erasmus. It was not until later that he learned Greek. He had already studied Hebrew. He knew what exegesis owed at that time to the most recent revolutionary studies in language and literature, but he did not allow it to dominate him, as is clear from his dispute with the great teacher, Erasmus.

From a letter to Spalatinus dated 18th January 1518 we can see what hermeneutical ideas he had already developed. Spalatinus had requested him to propose a method for research on holy scripture. Luther knew that he could not require him to possess independent linguistic knowledge. He referred him to Erasmus as the great authority on philology, the "grammatica", to Augustine's De spiritu ac litera and also to various works of Jerome, although here he had some reservations. But then follow some important personal sentences: Spalatinus must know that no one ever has power over scripture except God himself. One must let the spirit work through the words, in humble despair. One must simply begin to read, to read carefully, so as "to acquaint oneself with the simple course of the stories". Attention to details must never detract attention from the whole.

When Luther speaks here of "reading" he means reading the whole Bible. This is something we Lutherans need to be reminded of constantly. The Old Testament has played a very great role not only for theologians but also for the congregation. Luther's sermons on Genesis, for example, were and still are well known, but they form only a fraction of his sermons on the five books of Moses which covered a period of ten years (from 1519-1529):

"We therefore see that all the Apostles and Evangelists in the whole of the New Testament are of the same opinion: they drive us to the Old Testament which alone they call holy scripture; for the New Testament should really be the actual living word and not scripture; moreover it was not written by Christ". (WA 10.I.2.34,27ff). *)

From these words it is clear not only that Luther had an eye for the Bible as a whole, the absolute necessity of the Old Testament for understanding the New Testament, but also sees the theological importance of the literary genre!

In a letter dated 21st March 1518 he writes to Lang in Erfurt, that it will soon be possible to give lectures in the three languages, i.e. Latin, Hebrew and Greek, "and then also on Pliny, mathematics, Quintillian and other important matters after the useless lectures on Hispanus, Tartareetus and Aristotle have disappeared". The significance of this is plain when we remember that Hispanus and Tartareetus were concerned with scholastic logic, and that Quintillian was the famous Roman rhetorician and teacher of rhetoric.

*) Weimarer Ausgabe (the Weimar edition of Luther's works)

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In Luther's opinion, therefore, an educational reform on these lines would provide a sound basis for a correct understanding of the biblical texts. Of course, that would not be sufficient; for real understanding experiencia is essential. And that is a difficult concept easily misunderstood, especially as the translation "experience" may sound too anthropocentric. Then one hears people say, "I only believe what I can experience", and so experience becomes the measure of faith. But that is impossible. Faith remains the measure of experience; experience does not produce faith; it receives faith. Experience does not prepare one to receive the spirit; but it opens us to spirit and truth in every aspect of our nature. Hermeneutically the concern here is with the relation to the text, after one has understood it as well as possible and has allowed it to speak. This is clearly proved by Luther's approach to the texts about Noah and Abraham, for example; at first all the details, then he lets the text speak to him and identifies himself with Noah for instance, because Noah stood alone against the whole world, or with Abraham who believed against all the appearances. Only in this way is he given the courage to believe and confess.

So the spirit works through the medium of scripture, not mechanically, but in a human way. Just as the word did not fall from heaven, but revealed itself in human form in Christ. I quote: "Holy scripture is the word of God, written and spelt out (so to speak), just as Christ is the eternal word of God veiled in human form. And just as Christ is held and dealt with in the world, so it is with the written Word of God. It is a worm and not a book, compared with other books." (WA 48,31,4,Exegesis Ps.22).

I would add: as in the case of Christ, so here, the human form must be taken very seriously, not as some holy, superhuman figure but precisely in its human-ness. It is in and through men and women that this literature is a medium for the working of the spirit, and only in this sense can it be called "the word of God". Consequently we cannot draw an easy distinction between form and content, nor separate them from one another. That is not what is meant by the distinction between the letter and the spirit. The letters, the words, are destroyed if one takes them out of their whole context, out of the body, or if one dismembers the whole and then leaves it at that. Destruction of the former kind is often found in the fundamentalist treatment of scripture; the latter form often occurs when a scientific method is used which is no longer regarded as the last word even in literary criticism generally.

Claritas scripturae and main principles

Before we distance ourselves still further from the strictly historical level, something must be said about claritas and about the main hermeneutical trends among the Reformers.

In the quarrel with Erasmus, the discussion about the obscurity and clarity of scripture plays a crucial role. It was Luther's conviction that without the assurance that scripture is basically clear and can fend for itself, create a hearing for itself, there is no basis for assertio, confession!

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Of course there are obscure passages in scripture, but the real substance or theme of the Bible is asserted unanimously by all authors, despite their differences and their particular character. I quote from a sermon of that period: "Thus scripture is its own light. It is well, then, if scripture is its own interpreter. Therefore do not believe, but be free to regard as obscurity what is not verified by clear texts of the Bible." (WA 10.3.238)

Of course, not everything is equally clear. On the contrary! This may be the fault of our comprehension, but it may also be inherent in the matter itself. On this question Luther expressed his views very boldly. But if we heed the basic voice of holy scripture, we can exercise that freedom of which even Erasmus did not think people were capable. Luther thinks from the centre of biblical theology outwards; he can therefore establish an order of precedence within the Canon, but without ever excising anything.

Who knows what discoveries still await us if we really understand how the spirit worked also in these authors. In this whole process it is, of course, very important to be able to establish some main biblical-theological principles to serve as a supporting framework, a pattern which becomes clear through reading (see letter to Spalatinus) and understanding. The joy and gratitude which one feels for such clear principles may lead to a certain laziness in exegesis, if they are applied too hastily, without first letting the texts speak for themselves. Luther himself was not always immune from this danger; but his exegesis of the Old Testament, for example, shows that he was fully aware of the danger; and he certainly did not make things easy for himself.

Probably the best-known principle of the biblical theology of the Reformers is the correct distinction between Law and Gospel. "Nisi enim diserte discernatur Evangelium a Lege, non potest salva retineri doctrina christiana" (WA 40.1.486).

We can only understand this difference rightly, however, if we see that the generic term is the word of God which comes to us in "two preaching ministries". But it is already dangerous to speak about two preaching ministries. There is, of course, only one ministry; God's message cannot be divided, his anger exists in order to serve his love. Moreover one must be much more aware of the different shades of meaning contained in the concept of "Law" than is usually the case. It is assumed often far too quickly that "Law" implies a general natural law. But to Luther "Law" means the Torah, the commandment of God revealed in the Bible. This can change in details according to circumstances, and certainly has analogies in the general sense of law, but it is rooted in the basic statement: "I am the Lord your God". That is the heart of the Law, and Luther realized very early how liable to misinterpretation this translation can be, because Torah means doctrina, instrumentem von instruere docere (WA 4.322, 32d), i.e. not merely a "thou shalt" but teaching, existential instruction, to quote Buber's translation, and therefore also promissio. Yes, the basis and beginning of the Law is the promissio, the call, which liberates from gods and powers and makes it possible to live in accordance with God's will.

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From the outset, therefore, Luther understood the word "Law" as a form of the word of God, and not merely as the negative form of the Gospel; for the Law is good (Romans 7,12), the Torah is rooted in God's will for salvation, in the Covenant, in the promissio.

It is only in the struggle with our ill will, with our sin, that the Law is angry, just because it springs from God's will to save us. The struggle against sin is necessary in order to make room for life, for the life even of the sinner. The concern is not merely for moral details but primarily for the basic attitude. Luther can therefore equate sin and unbelief with rebellion against God. One form of unbelief is to imagine we can fulfil the Law through our own efforts, but then to misinterpret the Law. The only source of our own actions now is what God has done for us. In the Longer Catechism Luther sums this up as follows: "Now these words contain both an angry menace and a kindly promise, so as to frighten and warn us, to attract and rouse us, so that we accept his word as divine earnest and revere it greatly, because he himself says how greatly he is concerned about this. Thereby he will have demanded that they all proceed from hearts which fear God alone and have eyes for him alone, and which do nothing contrary to his will because they fear his wrath, hearts which trust in him alone and which do what he wills out of love for him" (The Book of Concord, p. 408f.).

That is what Luther writes in the conclusion to his exegesis of the Ten Commandments. Can God's will, therefore, be observed only by people who know and believe all that? Certainly not. There are analogies in the world outside among people who do his will without knowing him. We perceive something of this also in Matthew 25:31f.!

But really to know God's will we must consult this special revelation, not reason. Believers are "in the secret", they have the syneidesis, as it is called in Romans 13:5.

They therefore know also that this "friendly promise" has been fulfilled in Christ, and now I quote Luther again in one of his sermons on the Book of Exodus: "We recognize that Christ died for us and we receive the Holy Spirit and are filled with love for God, to whom we were hostile before. When God is pleasing to us, and this love is at work, then there is peace and God's will is done, and also what the Law demands. We love the Law and are glad of it, because we have become entirely different persons. In the Latin version: tum lex non facit malam consentiam, sed gaudium". (WA 16.285). See also what Fagerberg says about the word mandatum in the Confessional Documents (op. cit., p.19f.).

Closely connected with this line of thought, of course, is the basic concept of "justification" and also the theologia crucis, which as an exegetical principle, also in the Old Testament, does not have to be applied to the texts but is self-evident. We need only read how Luther even perceives the "paradox" of the cross in the story of Noah: "It is all paradoxical, completely contrary to all human reason, contrary to what we think and to what we see, feel and hear. Faith stands there and says: God cannot and will not lie.

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He therefore closed his eyes and smothered all reason, and held to the word alone" (WA 24.172f.). And again in the story of Abraham: "He should have said, how can God behave in such a foolish way? What have I done to be martyred like this? But the' pious Father Abraham held so firmly to the word that he strove against God himself and won' " (WA 24.390f.). That is a constantly recurring description of faith against and despite all appearances: a cross, and yet not a cross!

We have also learned theologically (it would be to our shame if it were not so!) that exegesis of this kind remains valid because it is consonant with the heart of this story.

A "linear" concept of the Bible

One problem which confronts us in the exegesis of the Reformers is the fact that they still read in a "linear" way, i.e. they still regard the order in which the biblical books are arranged as if they formed a historical sequence. The history starts with the good creation and the original state of the world, goes on to the fall, then via Noah to Abraham and Moses, etc. This still has theological repercussions in many ethical systems, which deduce ethical norms from this concept of the original world. Both science and systematic theology have raised objections here, and rightly so. The Book of Genesis, especially the beginning of it, was written as a poem about the origin of the world, in the light of Israel's experience. The concept of God's act of redemption is constantly mentioned. The house of bondage in Egypt is the systematized tohuwabohu; the people are led out of the Egyptian darkness by the light, the pillar of fire. God gives his people - as pars pro toto for the nations - the dry land in the midst of the waters. Materials for this vision, which depicts this redemption in universal colours, were found everywhere - especially if it is true that the Genesis stories received their final form in Babylon, the very place where such encouragement was needed. If all this is true, it is clear that God's special act is reflected (almost as liturgical thinking) in his all-embracing acts. And humanity? Humanity surrenders to temptation again and again; humanity is the eternal Eve, the eternal Adam. We have been warned! But it is permissible to dream of paradise, and to hope for it, for it is in the future, rather than in the past!

The Bible, therefore, is never concerned with a mere chronicle of events; it is always a narrative confession of the Lord, who performs miracles. In itself this, too, is not all that far removed from Luther's concept of the Heilsgeschichte. He seeks the solution in a distinction between God's relation to time and our own dependence on the passage of time. For God everything that is happening already is. He is directly present in every age, and always the same. Only in this way can we understand Luther's saying that the whole Bible "inculcates" (Christum treibet). Christ is the living word of God, the promissio incarnate; for Luther this word of God is his first word, and one must and can hold fast to the first word. "We must at all times take our stand on the first promise and on God's first commandment; even if a thousand forms of death come we must say:

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God does not lie to me, I shall live" (WA 16.65f.). For us that is inextricably connected with faith in Christ; but it is not a case of already calling Moses (the subject of the last quotation) or Abraham (of whom Luther says he was really baptized, for he believed the word) Christians. Moses and Abraham lived before Christ, not knowing this salvation but in expectation of it. But through God they believed implicitly in the whole salvation, the all-embracing word of God.

Such analogies, based on the unity of the one promissio, made a biblical theology possible. But does this still hold good? Certainly not in the same form and in the same way; but perhaps not without some relation to what the Reformers achieved in hermeneutics and exegesis as the basis of their confession.

Hermeneutical possibilities today

Heinrich Böll has written a witty story which is very significant. A theologian with a philosophic bent was to speak on television about the concept of God. In recording his address he used the word "God". But after recording it on tape he decided that he could no longer answer for the word "God", and that it must be altered every time it occurred into "that higher being whom we revere". I leave the result to your imagination. The important point is that here a man of letters is once again pulling the leg of us theologians!

When applied to our subject this story means: must this great literature, the "Biblia", which has been proclaimed, recited, recorded, brought into history by people who lived, thought, wrote and preached in the spirit of the Lord, must it be accommodated to our present-day faculties of thought and tailored to fit them? Who would do that with Dostoevsky, Shakespeare or Goethe?

The Bible naturally thinks and speaks in terms of the old cosmology, which is no longer scientifically acceptable. But does that mean that we can no longer make any sense of the story of the ascension? We say every morning that the sun has risen, although that is nonsense from the scientific point of view.

What Bultmann and others have said, in criticism of this, must be regarded primarily as repudiation of a primitive hermeneutic which made things unnecessarily difficult for believers. The church has certainly lost many members because it did not speak out clearly about these things. The church failed to show that such a concept of holy scripture is asking too much of people, and even more, that it offends and obscures the real meaning of these biblical passages.

So some stories of miracles became inverted semeia, and people shrugged their shoulders in disbelief at them, because they confused mystery with metaphysics. Bultmann drew the consequences of this development and tried to separate what is unnecessarily disturbing from the permanent truth of

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the story, to distinguish between the kerygma and the mythological form. Although that does more justice to the concern of the biblical stories than earlier methods, one is compelled to ask whether that is possible at all. The historical school had done it in a different way: it looked for the historical kernel of the biblical stories. Of course that is not a bad thing in itself; but too little attention was paid to the fact that the biblical narratives are in an entirely different category and have an entirely different scope from that which is envisaged by the question "how things actually happened".

It is nonsense to look for remains of the ark on Mount Ararat. But it is also nonsense to say: the historical kernel is some kind of legend about a flood in Mesopotamia, which Israel included in its history. That is no help at all to us in understanding the whole profound meaning of this wonderful story, which from time immemorial has been read on the night before Easter because it is a deep message concerning the unfailing loyalty of God.

So we can do nothing with the historical skeleton, nor with a distinction between the content and the mythological form, for all these things belong together. We have to try to read this story as a literary unity (or better still to narrate it), and thus try to experience all the great things that it tells us, without being disturbed by its simple form (as Luther already said). On the contrary!

The question is whether we can do this. And if not, why not? We are told: we can't talk to modern people about a shepherd. What idea can city people possibly have of a shepherd? It would make just as much sense to say: in Holland I can't make anything of a story about a vineyard or a vine. Not to mention people in Tallinn!

Great demands are made on people today by what they read and hear. Should we not equally make demands on them for this great purpose? We must stop adapting the text for modern ears, and start opening those ears to the adventure of entering this strange and wonderful country.

Surely it is possible to use the findings of research (as the Reformers did in their way) without being dominated by those findings. It must be possible to explain and interpret the Bible in that way; but, above all, to listen to it in its own essential force, so that it can work upon us without any restriction whatsoever. We must learn once again to have eyes and ears for the detailed subtleties in the text, for the secret language that is often concealed in it, for the sacred jokes, for the character of the text, because this is often the only way to find its message. It already begins with translating, as we know from Reformation times. One example will suffice to show what I mean. If one sees what an important role is played by the word "great" in the Book of Jonah: a great city, a great wind, a great storm, great fear, a great fish, and then... the prophet's great anger about the mercy of God! In how many translations does one find that again? Well, that is not difficult to correct; but in

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other cases it is not so easy.

If we have criticisms to make, we must speak out. I give some other examples, therefore, so that you can judge for yourselves.

Chapter 3 of the Book of Daniel tells of the three men who refused to worship the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar; they were flung into a fiery furnace but they remained unhurt. Is it enough if I am told when that may have happened, or whether clay tablets have been found describing it, or that another similar story exists elsewhere? Have I done enough if I decide whether or not I can still believe this story?

No. We must read and listen to the whole story. We are quite free to call it a wonderful legend if we pay our full attention to what it says and let it penetrate us. The endless repetition, which certainly must not be cut short, of the hierarchy of officials surrounding the king, and of all the instruments in the royal band, conceals a superlative satire on tyranny. It prepares us for the great show-down when the king stands trembling in front of his own furnace, trembling because in the fire he can see three, no four, figures walking. He is in darkness, they are in the light - as in Egypt... The king is converted, but his behaviour continues to be so militaristic that one feels bound to say, he still had a lot to learn about the true God who is Lord! In my experience one can translate and read this story in such a way that every intelligent church member immediately understands what it means. It assumes a special character on the night before Easter, when it has traditionally been read, and still is today.

A second example is found in the story of the raising of Lazarus in the 11th chapter of John. This account can raise similar problems, and the confusion is increased when one finds that it is doubtful whether a place called Bethany ever existed on the other side of the Jordan. But if we let this story speak, placing ourselves (in imagination) among the candidates for baptism for whom the Gospels were originally written, then many things become clear.

After hearing that his friend was ill and in danger of death, Jesus remained on the other side of the Jordan for two more days. John relates this not because he had a special calendar noting the dates of the events, but because he wants to indicate that on the third day the Messiah went through the water in which he had been baptized by John. As you know, John does not recount the baptism of Jesus at the beginning of his Gospel; but he is clearly referring to it here. On the third day, the Messiah passed through the water of death and the promise of life. Not only for himself, but for the life of his friends as personified in this friend Lazarus = Elazar (Lord help!). So this is already an indication of Easter; at the same time (as his audience certainly did not fail to realize) it all refers back to Joshua's (= Jesus') crossing of the Jordan into the promised land.

This passage therefore refers to baptism and also to Easter in their widest significance. So also one is prepared for the mystery of the resurrection of

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Jesus, a historical event, or better the historical event which eludes description as a chronicle, or any kind of realistic description (as shown in I Corinthians 15). It is just through reverent implication, as in John 11, that its full significance becomes evident. In order to perceive it, one has only to keep knocking for admission to the text, as Luther says.

Nor can there be anyone who fails to see the masterly way in which the candidate for baptism is instructed about holy communion in the Gospel of John. In John 13, where the words of institution are expected, it is shown that liturgy cannot exist without diaconia. The mystery of the elements is concealed (but as obviously as the Easter eggs which are hidden for children!) in John 2 and John 6. Both in John 2 and in John 6 it is mentioned that the Feast of the Passover was approaching; in John 2 the story of the marriage at Cana is related. In John 6 the bread of life is connected with the manna in the wilderness; moreover the mention of "much grass" (John 6:10) may possibly refer to Psalm 23. No wonder that the old Lutheran Lectionary assigns this pericope to "Refreshment" Sunday (in Mid-Lent).

The liturgy also plays an important role in Luke 24, the story of Emmaus. One perceives it immediately if one refuses to be distracted by questions about the identity of the disciples, etc. If Luke had considered that relevant he would have mentioned it. No! The story begins with a Kyrie Eleison which is like a psalm: "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel..." and the reference to the "three days" should not be ignored. Then the Lord (whom they have not yet recognized) "expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself... beginning at Moses and all the Prophets". In the apostolic constitutions, and in other places also, there are readings from the Torah and the prophets, as in the synagogue. With burning hearts (therefore with experience), they listen to his interpretation, they beg him to remain with them, and in the evening they celebrate communion. The Lord reveals himself to them, but the mystery is still great. At the end there is even an ite missa est; they know that they have been sent to their brethren. Truth or poetic myth? It is precisely in poetic myth that one discovers truth. Matthew is also a masterly narrator. One of the climaxes is the story of Pilate's wife, which was often an exegetical problem (Matt.27:19). I am indebted to my colleague Breukelman for pointing out to me that her warning is quoted in the middle of this section. As so often in the Gospel, it is a woman who proclaims the truth; the words "in a dream" and "that just man" are key words (Matt.1:20f.). When Pilate fails to heed her, he misses the last opportunity of carrying out his duties as governor. It is the turning-point in the whole story. For that is the whole truth: here the judge himself is judged; here stands "the just man", and the real meaning of this can only be understood at the deepest level if one reads the Old Testament and the New Testament together. Much more is involved than personal justice. All the relationships in society are involved in this concept, which cannot possibly be correctly understood if interpreted merely in legal terms.

When David sinned against justice, the Prophet Nathan told him a story. David raises historico-critical questions: who, when and where? But the important thing is not the story itself; the important thing is God's story

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with him and with his neighbours. Even if historical facts are mentioned, these stories are told for the purpose of showing how God acts in human history.

So let the text speak; give these witnesses an honest chance; listen again and again with attention, with the joy of discovery and with reverence for the severe but encouraging message which is addressed to us. Let the old working watch tick; don't rush to open the back of it. The author has chosen this form in the name of God, in the spirit of his Lord; he has written these sentences in this way in order to stimulate our curiosity, to lead us to the mystery, thus teaching us to think and experience, to believe and confess.

Often they do not make things easy for us, nor is it a simple matter. One can never say, "I have finished with the Book". What is involved here is the mystery of the word. We may contribute something that may help us in listening, but it must never turn the text into an object; for ultimately it is not we who are interpreting the text; the text is interpreting us! "We are beggars, that is true, only follow the footsteps of this divine Aeneid." With these famous thoughts taken from the last words of Martin Luther I should like to close. They stand in a hermeneutical context. And it is not by chance this text of Luther's forms the basis of the whole hermeneutic of Kornelius H. Miskotte (to whom I also owe a great deal) - the man who means so much for theology and especially for the development of hermeneutics and exegesis in my country.

No confession without preaching, no preaching without seeking the traces of the ingens miraculum, the incomprehensible miracle, as Luther calls it in the same text.

That is why I have ventured so far in this territory - a field in which I still feel like a novice (and I do not say this out of modesty). I therefore look forward to discussion, and to further exchange of thought. We all read the Bible. That is always the main task for Christians and for churches, for where else shall we turn? It is here that we find the words of eternal life, words for the days of heaven on earth (Deuteronomy 11:21).

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Luther's notes, written two days before his death (WA Tr. 5677)

Vergilium in Bucolicis et Georgicis nemo potest intelligere,
nisi quinque annis fuerit pastor aut agricola.
Ciceronem in epistolis nemo intelligit, nisi viginti annis
sit versatus in republica aliqua insigni.
Scripturas sacras sciatur se nemo gustasse satis, nisi centum
annis cum prophetis ecclesias gubernaverit.
Quare ingens es miraculum Iohannis Baptista, Christi, apostolorum.
Hanc tu ne divinam Aeneida tenta, sed vestigia pronus adora.
Wir sein pettler. Hoc est verum.

No one can understand Vergil's Bucolics and Georgics
unless he has spent five years as a shepherd or farmer.
No one can understand the letters of Cicero unless he has assumed
responsibility for twenty years in the government of the state.
No one must imagine that he has tasted sufficiently of holy scripture
unless with the prophets he has led the churches for a hundred years.
Therefore: tremendous is the miracle of John the Baptist, of Christ,
and of the apostles.
So do not seek to comprehend the divine Aeneid, but bow in
profound reverence before its traces.
We are beggars. That is true.

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Theses and questions of group work

1. Biblical theology coordinates and summarizes all that the Bible has to say in detail in its colourful variety.
The Confession summarizes what must be said in the kairos of a crucial epoch.
Systematic theology (dogmatics) reflects on the relations between these given data and the particular period. In this way it helps to make preaching relevant to the present time.
Are the above statements true? Can they assist in clarifying the relation between the Bible, the Lutheran Confession and contemporary preaching?
2. In the address certain statements are made about the permanent importance of certain aspects in the Reformers' approach to the Bible, also about aspects which have again become relevant in a new way.
Would you like to add aspects which are not mentioned in the address?
Do you query the importance of certain aspects which are specially stressed in the address?
3. How do you judge the way in which the paper approaches the field of hermeneutics and exegesis?
Is justice done to the exegetical methods of the 19th and 20th centuries?
Does it make clear the difference between "biblicism" and "letting the Bible speak"? Have you any comments on the concrete examples? Do they make sense to you, or have you always adopted this approach? How can we continue to help each other internationally in this field?
4. How can the Bible function in the discussion about world problems, about social questions, about daily living, without falling into casuistry?
Do we not need a sound biblical theology as a basis for a sound macro-ethic and micro-ethic in continuous dialogue with contemporary thinking and efforts.

LECTURE IV

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What line of thought does mention of a theme of this sort suggest? In the Evangelical Lutheran Church - 'the Church of the Word' - people tend to think of worship as proclamation mainly in the sense of preaching. The church-goers' interest is centred on the pulpit; to attend a church service means to hear a sermon, sometimes to hear a preacher. This doesn't apply only to the laity. Many of the clergy too are affected by this "interference" from the environment. At best it means that the preparation and conduct of a church service chiefly concern the preparation and delivery of the sermon.

I quote an actual instance. By way of supplement to the Evangelical Catechism for Adults, a best-seller in the churches of the Federal Republic of Germany, so-called "Catechism Letters" were issued. Letter 9 contains the question: What do you look for from a church service? I quote from the answer: "At the head of the list comes the sermon, and that goes for 92 % of regular church-goers". Of course, the Letter itself points out that worship is also something else. But as a sub-title in the text has it: "The sermon's the thing".

Worship is proclamation and proclamation is preaching: that is a widespread conviction in our Lutheran churches. In no other church in the world is there so much preaching. Bishop Hanns Lilje remarked a few years ago at a preachers' seminar: "In our churches one might almost say 'it is preaching' as one says 'it is raining'".

The main theme, "Proclamation Today", raises critical questions for the sub-theme, "Worship as Proclamation". Is proclamation only preaching? Is worship only public worship? In response to these questions, we wish to examine the following themes: Service of God in daily life is also a form of worship as proclamation. In all forms of worship, proclamation has a wider sense than simply preaching the word.

I. What is worship?

1. The term

In New Testament usage it is difficult to find a suitable term for what we call "worship" or "divine service". We find, of course, central terms

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such as latreia, threskeia, sebesthai and leitourgia, but none of these is used in the New Testament for the phenomenon which in ordinary speech we call "worship".

The words used by the Greeks or in the Old Testament for the specifically liturgical worship of the divinity are not capable of expressing what takes place when Christians assemble for worship. Those terms break down because of the newness of the New Testament worship. When they are used, they mostly refer either to pagan cults or Israel's forms of worship. When they are used in a Christian connection, they present a new content. The Christians are told that their latreia is a "spiritual" (or "rational") service of God, that is, the undivided sacrifice of their whole corporeal existence to God (Rom. 12:1-2). When the term threskeia is used of non-Christian phenomena, it has a markedly cultic stamp. It can also be used as a category in comparative religion. In Acts 26:5 it denotes the Jewish religion among the multiplicity of religions; the Vulgate translates it appropriately as religio. When the word is applied to the Christians, however, it loses any specifically cultic and ritual meaning (Jas. 1:26f.). In the New Testament, the Christians themselves never call their service of God a sebesthai. In the New Testament that word denotes the worship paid to a pagan divinity (Acts 19:27), or worship of created things (Rom. 1:25). The word is also used to denote Jewish Pharisaical ritualism with the quotation from Isaiah 29:13 (Mt. 15:9; Mk. 7:7). Similarly, the term leitourgia does not denote what we call "worship". In Apologia XXIV, 78-83, in the section De vocabulis Missae, Melanchthon pertinently expounds the basic meaning of leitourgia. It has, of course, a very wide range of meanings in the New Testament, but it does not occur as a designation for "worship" in the sense in which we use the term.

We are inclined to say with Peter Brunner that the term that comes closest to our "divine service" or "worship" is "to be assembled in Jesus' name" (synagesthai), or "to come together in the ekklesia or as ekklesia" (synerchethai). There is also the term "breaking of bread". These expressions, however, do not stem from the cultic sphere, but from that of everyday life.

Etymological considerations show that it is not possible to give an unambiguous, objectively appropriate designation for "worship". In the New Testament, what we refer to by that word is an occurrence, something that takes place, which comprises not only liturgical worship in church but also a service of God in daily life. The one total worship of God is accomplished in a manifold variety of forms. In Luther's exposition of the first commandment in the Large Catechism, it is said that true reverence and worship is to stand to God in such a way "that the heart shall know no other comfort nor trust save in Him, that it shall not let itself be torn from Him but venture and stake thereon all that is on earth".¹⁾

True worship of God is none other than faith and the love of God and the neighbour which flows from it. If the life of Christians in its entirety is

1) Luther's Primary Works, ed. H. Wace and C.A. Buchheim (London: 1896), p. 36.

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a divine service of worship, that is because it has found a concrete focus which as the dominant energizing centre determines their whole existence. Consequently, according to our examination of the terminology of scripture, worship in all its forms is proclamation in the widest sense, partly for those assembled, partly for the surrounding world.

2. God and worship

God and worship belong together. The idea of God determines the worship of God in the congregation as well as the service of God in daily life. In both cases, the service shows what God people have. Worship is therefore proclamation. But God can only be had in faith. Consequently the concept of faith determines what worship people have. The question of worship as proclamation is, therefore, not primarily a liturgical question, but one that concerns the idea of God and the concept of faith. False notions in either respect transform the worship of God into idolatry. That applies to pagans, but also to the church.

Nowadays, many people in and outside the church have a wrong idea of God. Either God is the strict, supervising, all-seeing God. "Take care! God sees you!" Or he is a God who involves no obligations, makes no demands. Which idea of God does our worship proclaim today for human beings with their longing and fear? Liturgical reforms are closely connected with the question of salvation and consequently with the idea of God and the concept of faith. What it means to have a God, therefore finds expression in worship. A quotation from Luther recalls the connection between God and worship: "... The statement, 'I am thy God', which is measure and goal, all that may be said of God's service..." .

3. The church of worship

In Lutheran theology, the church is understood chiefly on the basis of its liturgical function. The Augsburg Confession defines the church as follows: "Est autem ecclesia congregatio sanctorum, in qua evangelium pure docetur et recte administrantur sacramenta" (Art. 7). Here the church is constituted by the divine service which is celebrated in the congregation. The congregatio sanctorum therefore arises out of the worship. If one asks what and where is the church, one is referred to the corporate worship. The worship proclaims the Gospel. It says that the church is not there for its own sake, that it has a function, that it is there for others, and that it is so precisely as proclamation. Liturgical forms are "externals" which have no value in themselves but only in the use made of them in faith. Consequently, liturgical orders of service can and must be variable. The only enduring thing is the service of the Word and of the sacraments in which the church becomes tangible for the salvation of men. Where the Word of the Gospel and the sacramental sign remain intact and act as "stimulus to faith", other forms can also occur in worship. Since Reformation days the Lutheran churches have concerned themselves with worship precisely from these points of view. And in this connection all liturgy has been understood as proclamation, in the sense in which we are speaking here of liturgy, worship, divine service.

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II. Worship as proclamation within God's economy of salvation

1. Within the economy of the salvation of all humankind

Human beings were created in God's image. The activities expressive of their character as image were manifold, comprising the whole reality of the first human creature. Among them were some acts which stand out in a special way as divine service. The special feature by which man mirrors God as his image, consisted in the fact that through God's paternal summons man became person, an I. God willed man as the child of his love. Consequently man's mirroring of God occurs in and through a spiritual act which may be called worship. Man cannot be God's image without the direct adoring utterance of recognition, of thanksgiving, of glorification addressed to the Creator. Without prayer and praise man would not be the mirror of God's glory. Consequently God wills that human beings should fulfil the creative command to praise him, in a different way from stones, plants, animals and the stars, which do so without choice, like the angels. God created for man a space of freedom. He looks for the loving response of a child saying "Yes" to him in personal freedom. Here we find the foundations of everything that may be called "worship". Before the fall, man spoke this "Yes, Father", not on the ground of a choice, but in unquestioning, wholehearted spontaneity, as a matter of course, as a manifestation of humanity's true original freedom. This turning to God the Creator included acts directly addressed to God. The special character of these is suggested symbolically and mysteriously in the account of creation and the Garden of Eden, by the reference to a specially appointed time, the seventh day, and to a specially designated place, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The interpretation of the Sabbath and of Sunday plays a part in the understanding of worship and proclamation. We have not time here to discuss this problem. A few points must nevertheless be mentioned for further discussion. The relevant commentaries on the biblical passages regarding God's rest on the seventh day emphasize that that divine rest is to be distinguished from the initiation of the Sabbath as a cultic institution. It is, however, connected with it. The consummation of the creation is not work, action, but the stillness in which no more work is done. The first thing that man does after his creation is not work; he shares in God's rest. After he has rested in God, he can set to work. Worship, as we have seen, is not liturgical church service alone, but also divine service in daily life in love of the neighbour. Luther's exposition of the third commandment strongly emphasizes that there can be no question here of an external sanctification of the day of rest. For Luther, of course, the fact that the body needs rest is a natural law. God's intention in regard to the holy day is different. He has a spiritual purpose for it. Holy day therefore does not mean a human activity in the presence of God, a different activity from work, which would be so to speak a new, spiritual performance. The rest which God has linked with the seventh day is, rather, an expression of a receptive attitude. In the thanksgiving of faith, man rests from his own works and receives God's work in Word and sacrament. We touch here on the Gospel in its totality, which extends to the whole of Christian life and not merely to certain holy days. The rest, the celebration of the holy day, is therefore for Luther above all an expression

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of the faith that receives everything from God. This of course does not take place without God's service to us in Word and sacrament. The faith which receives this gift and work of God causes the congregation to share in the celebration. Only in receiving in this way is "celebration" identical with the congregation's celebration of worship. After these remarks, it becomes relevant to our theme to ask whether in our Lutheran churches we give expression to this conception of Sunday and of worship. What do our Sundays and their church services proclaim to people today? How much legalism still prevails in our congregations in regard to Sunday and divine services on that day? In this connection I should like to draw attention to what Erich Fromm and also the Nobel prize winner, Isaac Bashevis Singer, have written about the Sabbath and Sunday. In these days when the Augsburg Confession is in people's minds, I should also like to recall that what it has to say about Sunday, and consequently about worship, is very important.

Not only a specially appointed time but also a specifically determined place meet us when we open the first few pages of our Bible in our inquiry into worship as proclamation: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16f.). In an imaginative presentation, Luther understood this tree of knowledge as man's first place of worship on earth. He pictures to himself how Adam had his altar, his pulpit, there, where on the Sabbath he assembled his children, announced God's Word, praised and glorified God for his gifts, was mindful of the limits which God had set, and pointed out the obedience of faith which he accordingly expected there. Adam becomes the first preacher of the Word to Eve. The primary element in the church's worship is the living transmission of God's Word.

Not only Luther but also other Fathers of the church have seen in these features of the first acts of divine worship on earth characteristic marks of the church's services of worship. As the members of the church in faith become increasingly conformed to the likeness of the Son of God, and so to some degree radiate the image of God (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24), something of the original heavenly radiance which illumined the worship of the first human creature can shine forth again. The essence of the church's worship involves that spontaneous, direct, personal loving communion between God and man which we have noted in the Garden of Eden. Here we see worship as proclamation in a beautiful form.

The fall destroyed the worship bestowed on man with his creation. Idolatry took the place of spontaneous devotion in worship. But God did not forget humanity. He established new ordinances, sacrifice and priesthood, granted forgiveness and communion. The Old Testament worship, however, inherently involves a "not yet" in respect of the economy of salvation. All that takes place in its worship is directed to him who is to come. To that extent this worship is to be regarded as in a special sense proclamation. Israel is chosen for the sake of the Gentile world. That also applies to its worship. Consequently that worship is celebrated vicariously for mankind. It is there as proclamation. But it nevertheless remains tied to a particular place, to quite definite appointed times and persons and to specified obligatory rites. Israel's worship must therefore itself pass away when the new aeon comes with a new worship which proclaims more completely what it

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is to serve God and what it means that God first serves us.

The worship of the church of Jesus Christ proclaims that through Jesus' work we have found entry to the heavenly sanctuary with full access to the Father. It takes place in the body of Christ made apparent in the church. What had been proclaimed in the Old Testament worship by atonement through sacrifice, by the priestly service in the presence of God, has been realized in the New Testament worship by Jesus Christ. At the same time, worship in the New Testament announces a future still to come in God's economy of salvation, and it already contains that future within itself in a special anticipatory way. In the worship of the church on earth, something of what is to come in worship in heaven is not only announced but accomplished as actualizing representation of the eschatological table-fellowship with his own in the Kingdom of God.

2. In the special economy of salvation of the individual

The history of God with the individual mirrors God's universal economy of salvation. In worship, the individual is inserted into God's history of grace, first by the baptismal service, then by divine worship with proclamation of the Word and the Lord's Supper. In these services the individual has grace as proclamation within reach. Here, as a sinner he can be justified, by receiving forgiveness of sins ever anew, and in the newness of a pneumatic life he honours God in congregational worship and in the divine service of daily life. The historical meeting with this promise of grace in services of worship is man's crisis, in which it is decided whether he comes to share in the worship of the church of Jesus Christ or remains fettered in the slavery of idolatry. The service proclaims and concludes the possibilities.

3. The cosmic dimensions of worship

a) The angels' worship as proclamation

The worship of the heavenly hosts is not subject to our conditions. Accordingly their service before the throne directly mirrors the glory of God. The praise of God has become the very nature of the angels. In the centre of this heavenly worship stands Jesus, as in worship on earth (Rev. 5:6-12). The two liturgies are co-ordinated. By their common centre they are in mutual communication. What is proclaimed in the heavenly liturgy has its reflection in the earthly, and what is proclaimed here below has its fulfilment in heaven. The proclamation in each takes place with real interconnection (Rev. 7:9-12; Heb. 12:22-24). From these points of view we must ask to what extent this has meaning for our services of worship on earth.

b) Nature's worship as proclamation

The church's worship on earth rings out together not only with the worship in heaven, but also with the divine praises of the non-human, terrestrial creation. All the works of God in all places of his Kingdom praise the Lord in conjunction with the praise of the angels and the praise of my soul

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(Ps. 103:20-22). The starry sky is particularly emphasized as an instrument of this creaturely praise of God (Ps. 8:3; 96:11-13). The cosmos resounds with the proclamation of the manifestation of God's power in the work of creation. The psalmist in particular is aware of a universal, praising proclamation and manifestation of God's glory by the heavens, by day and night. "Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge." The elemental forces of nature which intervene with the divine theophanies, thunder and lightning, fire and smoke, are of importance here. "He makes the winds his messengers, fire and flame his ministers" (Ps. 104:4). Psalm 148 gives splendid expression to this incorporation of nature into the praises of the angels and of men. The statement in the Sanctus of Isaiah 6:3: "the whole earth is full of his glory", is to be understood in this perspective. We human beings cannot hear this worship and its proclamation, but through revelation in scripture it is intimated to us in what it consists. And those who have ears to hear also hear something of the longing sighs of the creation (Rom. 8:19-23). Not through its own fault, but because of its relation with guilty man in a common fate, does nature accomplish its worship and praise of God with sighs of longing. In this common destiny, however, there also lies the ground of the hope which it shares with mankind. When the liberation comes, nature too is to be set free from its sighs in its worship of God (Rev. 5:13).

c) The church's worship as proclamation is linked with the angels' praise and that of nature

It is akin to both but at the same time distinct from either. In all its three dimensions, worship as proclamation is centred on him who sits on the throne, and on the crucified and risen one who sits at his right hand. In the proclamation of worship he is ever present in different ways: on high in the immediate presence of the throne, here in the pneumatic presence revealed through the Word in faith, and in the sacramental presence based on Pneuma and Word, and there omnipresent in the creation.

These perspectives are very important for our worship. They are all too frequently forgotten, yet they are indispensable to the understanding of worship as proclamation. Humankind's destruction of nature destroys and hinders that proclamation nowadays, when for example in the silent spring the birds no longer sing and, because of its pollution, water exults no more. Even within the churches, secularization has also destroyed faith in what is happening in heaven, so that we no longer hear the angels. Worship as proclamation can assume new perspectives if we all allow the dimensions which Christian tradition opens to us in the Bible their full scope.

III. Worship as God's work

The proclamation of worship as a whole makes it clear above all that "service of God" is primarily to be understood as God's service to us. In the Reformation view, this conception of worship has grown from the Gospel itself, as found in Holy Scripture. Sola gratia is expressed once again

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by the fact that God serves us with his gifts when we are assembled for worship. The passion with which the Reformers, especially Luther, urged this viewpoint, is to be understood in connection with their fight against justification by works and against errors in the Roman Church of that time regarding the conception of human merit in the Mass. But it is always important, not least in our age which is marked by hysteria about efficiency and achievement, to conduct our church services in such a way that they do in fact make that message heard. The service as a whole, in all its parts, ought to be a proclamation that God is serving us now. This is done in various ways.

1. Preaching the Word

In the New Testament we find an almost bewildering wealth of ways of preaching the Word. They do not, of course, all appear in the same way everywhere and at all times; that is bound up with the gifts of the Spirit. But Jesus' church must always shape its forms of worship so that the rich variety of the Word as proclamation can find expression. The Word must be "vibrant".

The primary form of preaching the Word in the liturgy is scriptural readings, especially from the New Testament. We know, of course, that Luther very strongly emphasized that scripture should be expounded. He is sometimes very insistent indeed that God's Word is originally not written, but proclaimed by word of mouth. The church was not "a house of the pen, but of the mouth". That is because, for him, the real question was not that of the content of scripture; the text as such was not a problem for Luther. The most important question was, rather, what does it mean for me? This is the point of view from which Luther's higher estimation of the epistles in scripture as compared to the gospels, is to be understood. This does not mean that there is no place in worship for scriptural reading; provided it is used in such a way that people apply the Word to themselves, it too is proclamation. Perhaps we, as a Lutheran church, should emphasize this more strongly. The congregation has a right to hear the prophetic and apostolic word of scripture directly, without commentary. In the talks between the Roman and the Lutheran churches, this was a problem that was discussed. Worship as proclamation is manifest in the scriptural reading if this, unencumbered by biblicist and merit-tainted views, disengages the living, essentially spoken Word from its of necessity written form.

The Word of the Gospel in its most concentrated form meets the receptive human being at worship in the absolution. This element of the service is a concentrate of all proclamation. The very heart of worship as it were beats here. It is the most individual form of gospel proclamation in divine worship. Of course it must not proceed as an individual absolution alone, but also as forgiveness after confession of guilt by the whole congregation. It is our experience in Sweden, however, that most church-goers do not understand this element in the service in this way. We must devote more attention to this point and bring about a change in the congregations in this respect by instruction and education.

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Our services also contain a number of formulas such as salutations and blessings which are also a concentrated form of proclamation. I mention, merely as examples, salutation, pax, pulpit greeting, pulpit blessing and the blessing when the congregation is dismissed. To what degree are these elements of the service understood to be proclamation? We have a lot to do here if we are to make this clear in our congregations. These utterances are quite different from what we nowadays understand as "wishes". Jesus gave his disciples a share in his power to bless (Jn. 14:12). The disciples' greeting of peace is not empty, but filled with pneumatic reality (Lk. 10:5; Mt. 10:12f.).

The world can only wish for "peace". The Lord gives peace to those who are his in a different way (Jn. 14:27). So, too, the greeting with which the disciples enter a house is not a wish but a gift that can be accepted or rejected. It is so real that in the case of rejection the eirene (peace) returns to the disciples. The church is empowered with this authority to bless. In the lectures on Genesis, Luther explains this character of peace beautifully and clearly, noting on Genesis 27:38f. that these words of blessing are not "a mere empty sound of words". They are not exoptatio (wish) but donatio (gift). "They truly send and bring what the words say." In the Reformation view, this does not apply only to the patriarchal blessings in the Old Covenant; we also have blessings of this kind in the New Covenant through the priesthood of Christ. But the gift of blessing is received in faith alone.

The blessing that comes at the end of a liturgical act in particular bears this character of proclamation. It is spoken at the moment of farewell and sends the recipient forth to a new task. It is the "last word" of the service. Neither salutations nor blessings are unimportant elements in worship. Not infrequently they are treated by both pastors and laity as incidentals, mere formal phraseology. But if we are to understand worship as proclamation, we must not overlook these elements or even evacuate them of meaning. Other elements, too, in divine worship have the character of proclamation, but it would take us too far to go into details. We accordingly turn to the element in which we usually locate the proclamation in worship, namely the sermon.

We have already noted that church-goers today are particularly interested in the sermon. It is the pulpit they think of when reference is made to proclamation in worship. We are not concerned here to analyze preaching. We can only touch on a few points relating to the sermon as proclamation. The main purpose of the sermon as proclamation is to free men for faith. The need for exposition by the sermon is not due to scripture but to men's captivity. Preaching is therefore to be understood as a militant action of Christ. A sermon, to be truly such, must "use" Christ's death and resurrection. It builds a bridge from the living Word to human beings so that the text makes contact with the hearers. Only in that way is preaching proclamation. In many cases it is merely a monologue that gets nowhere, at best an analysis of the text, and expectations are disappointed. When, in addition, solemn official church language sounds alien and esoteric, it is not surprising that people say, "I inherited God with these formulas but now I am losing him through them". In group work we can exchange our churches' experiences in

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regard to preaching as proclamation. A good deal of work is being done on preaching in all churches nowadays, and, since it is needed, that is a good thing. We have a lot to learn from one another here. If preaching is in a crisis, the solution does not consist in reducing the act of preaching to a less prominent role in the liturgical life of the church in favour of other features. No renewal of the worshiping life of the church can succeed without a renewal of preaching. It has an indispensable function in the proclamation of the Word in divine worship. Its obligation to scripture and creed does not conflict with the historically concrete, free, pneumatic character of preaching.

2. Baptism and the Lord's Supper as proclamation

The sacraments in themselves as actions are a form of proclamation, not only in the congregation but also in society. They are evangelizing signs. In our national churches this situation creates special problems, above all in regard to baptism. What does the practice of infant baptism represent as proclamation today in a majority church? This problem has particularly come to the fore in the Scandinavian national churches, and we are seriously concerned with it. What is the situation in your church in regard to baptism as proclamation?

When we consider the Lord's Supper from the point of view of proclamation, we have, of course, 1 Corinthians 11:26 above all in mind: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes". The Lord's Supper is not mute. In the first place, the proclamation encompasses the eucharistic event. This applies above all to the words of institution, according to the ancient saying: accedit verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum. In addition to this, however, what is actually done in the Lord's Supper is itself proclamation. According to 1 Corinthians 11:26, the actual eating and drinking, that is to say the action itself, the dromenon, is part of the proclamation. Word and action here are fused into an indivisible unity. To that extent the act of celebrating the Lord's Supper is proclamation in the place where men kneel at the Lord's table.

The Lord's Supper as proclamation in worship is also connected with its character as anamnesis. The unique saving event is represented and actualized by anamnesis. With the Reformers, the Lutheran churches emphasize that what Jesus meant by his call to commemoration of him, is a proclamation, a sermon about him. In support of this explanation, Luther refers to Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:26; Psalm 102:22; 11:4f. Luther identifies "commemoration" and "Word preached". He does this in polemic against the Roman Church, in which the proclamation, the evangelism, in the Mass, points rather to the presence, speaks "about" it, whereas for Luther the proclamation is not extrinsic to the Mass but is a part of it. Luther's intention in interpreting the commemorative character in the sense of proclamation (as preaching), was also that of rejecting the view of the "enthusiasts" that the commemoration consisted in a positive human act raising the individual soul to God. The "commemoration" must rather be understood as a public action of God. This is well expressed in the Reformer's commentaries on Psalm 111:5, "He is ever

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mindful of his covenant", or on Psalm 111:6, "He has shown his people the power of his works". On the basis of these ideas, the sermon, the preaching, can also be understood as an exposition of the Mass. We meet here ideas which in our days need to be rethought afresh if we are to understand the evangelical depth of our theme of worship as proclamation, and especially that of the Lord's Supper as proclamation in worship.

3. The ministry as service of God in proclamation

How the ministry is to be understood is a central topic of interconfessional dialogues nowadays. It is not possible to discuss this vast problem here. I should like only to point out that we cannot deal with our theme without mentioning the ministry. In my opinion, the understanding of the ministry is of great importance for that of proclamation. Here, I should like to mention only one aspect which is not very often thought out afresh. The pastor is a preacher of the Word, undoubtedly; but he is also a sermon himself, by what he is, not only in his daily life but in the conduct of worship. He must not be the centre of the service. His bearing and gestures affect it in various ways; there is even a danger of its being celebrated for his sake. The pastor as sermon, not only as preacher, is a very important sub-theme in our thinking about worship as proclamation.

IV. Worship as a work of faith

Only in faith is God served. As we noted above, the conception of worship is closely connected with that of faith. True worship accordingly manifests something of the faith of those who come together for it.

Worship is, therefore, also the congregation's service in faith before God. This finds expression in various ways. We have already observed that the entire act of worship belongs to the domain of prayer. But that prayer is also embodied in special activity, in particular acts, in the service. The summons, "Let us pray!", means that special elements in the service are to be understood as prayer. In these prayers the congregation proclaims how it meets the Lord in faith. Consequently the prayers of public worship must be very carefully composed. Liturgical renewal also includes these elements.

Confession as an element in worship is, of course, especially to be understood as proclamation. This applies to confession of sin as well as to the creed. These actions are performed publicly in the world and publicly in the church precisely as proclamation. It is not just that the service of worship may be made into a sign; it is itself a temporal sign of profession of faith. Here faith manifests itself as proclamation in worship. The confession of faith always has the intrinsic character of witness. This provides an opportunity for proclamation to the world. At certain times no other remains except martyrdom.

This is not the whole of confession in worship, however; it also includes sacrifice of thanks and praise. The word homologein in the New Testament means to confess sins, to profess faith and to praise God.

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The worship in heaven is full of what are called "acclamations". As a reflection of this worship, acclamations of that kind also occur in earthly services. We already find them in the Bible (Mt. 21:9). By these cries in the presence of God, the worshiping congregation confesses or proclaims whom it serves. The liturgical acclamations also cry out to all earthly powers which demand veneration, that our God alone is the God we adore. This is addressed to the world as proclamation of the Word.

This also applies to the proskinesis (ceremonial reverence: low bow). The adoration of God in the liturgy occurs of course in various forms, of which proskinesis is one. Here we have much to learn from the Roman Church. With the Reformation, many of these forms disappeared. In Sweden more than in Germany we have an unbroken liturgical tradition. Consequently we find in our church more proskinesis than in other Lutheran churches. In the case of doxological acclamation, the bodily side of its accomplishment should not be lacking. I gladly quote a remark of Luther here: "Where however there is heartfelt adoration, it is very properly followed by external bowing, bending, kneeling and bodily expressions of reverence". These external expressions also give worship its public character, and in this respect, too, it becomes proclamation.

In this connection something must be said, however briefly, of the importance of art in worship. This is a very significant form of proclamation, including music, architecture, images, decoration, etc. The opposition of the Reformers to the "enthusiasts", who were iconoclasts, can also be regarded as opposition to Christian hostility to culture. All forms of art can be employed as an aid to proclamation. A good reminder of this recently was the international art exhibition in Augsburg on the occasion of the Augsburg Confession celebration, entitled "World in Upheaval". This made it very clear how important art was at that time for proclamation, even in worship. In my opinion, we must make increasing use of such potential means of proclaiming the Gospel even today. With the help of modern technology, we can use various arts simultaneously. In my cathedral we have world-famous stained glass. If we conduct services of worship with the help of this art, glass, stone, music, choral singing, we achieve a plenitude in worship as proclamation that would be impossible without it.

V. The proclamation aspect of the liturgy

In the early church the liturgy was intended both as proclamation to people outside the church and as edifying celebration for members of the congregation. Nowadays the form of its proclamation function has been lost. The church faces a challenge here; it confronts all churches in the world. While I was preparing this address, I saw a program from England on the Swedish TV, dealing with the situation of the Anglican Church, to the effect that the latter had not succeeded in being missionary. We are concerned with this problem in our Scandinavian national churches too.

Is the congregation conscious of its mission to the world, or does it want to keep its faith for itself within its own borders? The answer is of decisive

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importance for its worship. Today our church services reach only a very small circle. Consequently when we try experiments in worship in order to find points of contact with people, the regular congregation often reacts unfavourably. Most churches nowadays are feeling this kind of strain. We have much to learn here from the experiences of the various churches, especially by exchange of experience between churches in different cultural regions.

Since worship is no longer missionary, its traditional pattern must be called in question and seriously reconsidered. New forms must be tried, particularly in view of proclamation to people outside the church. A very large part is certainly played here by the liturgical language of worship.

A special problem is that of linking everyday life with worship. If in its services the church adopts some standpoint on social problems, conflict at once breaks out, as we all know. Here the church must find a middle way so that it can clearly preach that there is a close connection between service of God in everyday life and corporate church worship. The congregation can serve God here by proclaiming the connection between liturgical worship and the service of God in daily life.

VI. Worship as proclamation of reconciliation and peace in the congregations, among churches and between peoples

One cause of the loss of confidence in the church today is disagreement in the congregations. The cause of this varies from church to church. With us it is especially the ordination of women. There can also be many other grounds. We must remember that the greatest obstacle to the preaching of the Gospel today is not to be found outside but inside churches. Our worship as proclamation must accordingly be above all a sign of peace and reconciliation in the congregations. If that is lacking, no liturgical reform, however radical, is of any use.

Our church services must also be a sign of ecumenism. The successful dialogues between the churches today must find an echo in our joint worship. Together before God in these services we can proclaim to the world that we are one in Christ.

In view of the threat of a new world war, our church services ought to be a proclamation of peace; everywhere in the world our churches must stand as a sign of reconciliation between nations. The people of God in all countries ought to represent and express this attitude in its services.

VII. Worship as proclamation in heaven

Here worship will pass over into hymnody. In the consummation, this hymnody is the final word with which the church speaks of God. Consequently hymnody is the final form of theology, a word (logos) about God (theos). It will no longer proclaim anything to the nations or to men. It will no longer beseech

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and pray for anything, no longer confess, acknowledge or proclaim anything any more. The hymnody has no extrinsic aim; it is the perfect mirror of the glory of God. Worship as proclamation has reached its fulfilment.

The foregoing paper could not have taken the form it has without the works of Peter Brunner ("Zur Lehre vom Gottesdienst der im Namen Jesu versammelten Gemeinde", in: Liturgia, Vol.1, 1954, pp. 83-364) and Vilmos Vaijta (Die Theologie des Gottesdienstes bei Luther, Lund, 1952). We should like to express our cordial thanks to both.

WORSHIP AS PROCLAMATION

Questions for group work

1. How can the study of biblical terms concerning worship help us to understand worship as proclamation?
2. How are the idea of God and the concept of faith reflected in the form of worship as proclamation?
3. What can we learn from Adam's worship in the Garden of Eden?
4. What has the cosmic liturgy of the angels and of nature to tell us about worship as proclamation?
5. How are we to overcome the crisis of preaching if it is no longer proclamation in the biblical sense?
6. What does 1 Corinthians 11:26 mean for our understanding of the Lord's Supper as proclamation?
7. In what sense is the pastor not only a preacher of the Word, but himself a sermon, both in church and in daily life?
8. Art as proclamation in the liturgy - how can this be used in church worship?
9. What is the position regarding the reform of the liturgy in our congregations in view of worship as proclamation?
10. Worship as proclamation at our theological conferences?
11. How can worship become a proclamation of reconciliation and peace in the congregations, among churches and between nations?

LECTURE V

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PROCLAMATION AS A DIMENSION OF PASTORAL CARE

1. Biblical reflections

1.1. If we are to speak of proclamation as a dimension of pastoral care, we are certainly right to take as our starting point the universal commission given by the risen Christ to his disciples: "Go therefore and teach all nations..." (Mt. 28:19); "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15).

1.2. The commission to proclaim the Gospel is the basis of all ministry of the Word in the Christian community, whether in the form of preaching, instruction, doctrinal teaching or pastoral care. Every minister of the Word must constantly bear in mind the charge: "Preach the word, be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine..." (2 Tim. 4:2). Proclamation as part of pastoral care differs from preaching because it is not tied to fixed times or places, because it cannot be planned in advance and takes place "in season and out of season", as opportunity arises in ordinary life.

1.3. Direct personal contact between the pastor-preacher and the recipient of the message is important: "Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15). This ministry is performed in conscious solidarity with the neighbour who is addressed. There will be an effort not only to understand the neighbour fully but also to come as close to him as possible in language and thought so as to make the good news intelligible to him.

1.4. In doing this, the pastor will be doing what the Apostle Paul did: "To the Jews I became as a Jew, to them without the law as being without the law, to the weak I became as weak... I am made all things to all men, that I might save some." (1 Cor. 9:20-22).

2. Pastoral care as a ministry of proclamation

2.1. Alongside preaching, liturgy, instruction and diaconia, pastoral care is an indispensable form of the life of the church. Along with the other forms of its life, the church also needs this special pastoral ministry within the congregation, needs it especially. In this pastoral ministry, the "good Shepherd", the Lord of the church, is himself at work. Through those whom he enlists in his service, he accomplishes his work of seeking

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the lost, binding up wounds, strengthening the weak and encouraging and comforting the disheartened. Pastoral care is the fulfilment of this pastoral ministry at the bidding and with the authority of the one "good Shepherd". In the form of "pastoral theology", the doctrine of pastoral care is the applied practical theology of the ministry, taking ministry to mean the pastoral office, the ministry of leadership and caring. In substance it means "caring for human beings", the "church's ministry to the human being" (W. Trillhaas) with the specific intention of providing the human being with "aid to living" and "aid to believing".

2.2. The main instrument of this ministry is conversation; as Luther says (in the Schmalkald Articles), it is a matter of mutuum colloquium, of speaking together. The real purpose of this conversation, says Luther in the same context, is the mutua consolatio fratrum, i.e. the mutual comforting of brothers and sisters. This ministry of comfort whereby the tempted, the insecure and the helpless are uplifted and strengthened is as much a part of the life of the Christian congregation as preaching, the administration of the sacraments and the exercise of the office of the keys. In Luther's opinion, all members of the congregation owe to one another this mutual fraterna consolatio in brotherly and sisterly conversation.

2.3. We realize, of course, that this vital pastoral ministry as envisaged by the Reformers tended later on largely to die away within the Protestant church. Shifts of emphasis appeared in the institutionalized church, a separation of ministry and congregation, a greater emphasis on the ministry than on the universal priesthood of all believers. The pastoral ministry was more and more attached to the special ministerial activities. While it was still possible to preserve the pure doctrine within this consequently over-structured church, and on the basis of the Confession to order the church's ministry aright and to preserve the church from heresy and fanaticism, it was at the cost of a one-sided development of the church as a "teaching institution" in which too little attention was paid to the pastoral ministry.

The course of history did not fail to produce reactions and corrections. While orthodox Protestants put the emphasis on the confession of faith, the champions of pietism were concerned with personal piety and the ministry of love. The later revivalist movements, especially within the framework of the "Evangelical Alliance" and the "Inner Mission", provided moreover important correctives in respect to the understanding of the church. There was a movement away from the institutional in the direction of the personal. Individual religious fervour for the most part went hand in hand with an intensification of pastoral care, especially in the sense of fraternal friendship and mutual encouragement and comfort.

2.4. In all Protestant churches, therefore, we find alongside the heritage of the Reformation also that of the revivalist movements of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Contemporary pastoral ministry, while naturally focusing particularly on the New Testament itself, will certainly have to link up also with this richly blessed church heritage.

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2.5. As has already been said, pastoral ministry is simply a concrete ministry of proclamation addressed personally to persons, and making use especially of conversation. This "brotherly and sisterly conversation" presupposes mutual acceptance and a willingness to listen to others. Its aim is the attestation of God's commandment and its validity for our lives, as well as the communication of the saving message.

3. Controversies in contemporary pastoral doctrine concerning the understanding of pastoral proclamation

3.1. The view that the pastoral ministry is a special ministry of proclamation has often been challenged in the specialist literature in the last decade.

3.2. The concept of proclamation was given a central place in the "kerygmatic pastoral care" developed within the "dialectical theology". Hans Asmussen had defined pastoral care as "a proclamation of the Word of God from one person to another", in which the Gospel is addressed directly to the individual as such ¹⁾. Eduard Thurneysen also stressed in his "Pastoral Theology" that the only concern in any pastoral conversation is "that God's Word may enter into it in all its spiritual power".²⁾ What is decisive, according to Thurneysen, is that in every pastoral conversation the other dimension should open up so that God himself can speak in it. Thurneysen speaks of a "breach" in the pastoral conversation whereby alone it is raised to a higher level than a purely human encounter.³⁾

3.3. It is just here that strong criticism was voiced. The line of this criticism is described by Joachim Scharffenberg as follows: this "theocentric view of pastoral care" to a great extent sent pastoral care into a deep sleep because it had largely lost sight of the human aspect of the pastoral transaction.⁴⁾

3.4. The existence of a considerable leeway to be made up in respect of the human aspect of pastoral activity has been felt above all since as long ago as the forties when the pastoral movement in the United States of America was beginning to attract attention.⁵⁾ The human sciences, especially psychology, psychotherapy, sociology and communications research, were, so to speak, rediscovered and placed at the service of pastoral care. The literature on this rapidly became unmanageable. The concept of "counselling" came more and more into the centre of attention and this led to the demand for a non-direct procedure between partners, each accepting the other, a procedure which focused attention precisely on the other person's feelings.

1) Hans Asmussen, Die Seelsorge (München: 1937), p. 15

2) Eduard Thurneysen, Die Lehre von der Seelsorge (München: 1948), p. 95.
(translated into English under the title A Theology of Pastoral Care).

3) *ibid.*

4) conf. J. Scharffenberg, Seelsorge als Gespräch (Göttingen: 1972), p. 14 ff.

5) conf. D. Stollberg, Therapeutische Seelsorge (München: 1969); Hans-J. Thilo, Beratende Seelsorge (Göttingen: 1971); H. Faber and E. van der Schoot, Praktikum des seelsorgerlichen Gesprächs (Göttingen: 1974).

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It was here presupposed that the other person is able to find and help him or herself if only he or she experiences solidarity and understanding. The pastor or counsellor was expected to concentrate wholly on the partner, renounce any idea of pointing out a possible solution to the partner's problems and allow him or her to find this solution by him or herself. Behind this approach is respect for the other as a person, respect for personal freedom and personal decision. In performing this entire co-human ministry, the delivery of a message is deliberately ruled out. Within this concept of pastoral care, the Gospel is not "verbalized" but is present in a non-verbal action: it finds expression in the acceptance of and the demonstration of solidarity with the other person.

3.5. However justified the concern of this new approach to pastoral care of the seventies may be in many respects, it seems to us nevertheless to be rather one sided. Above all, the distinctive substance of evangelical pastoral care seems to be surrendered here. It may be the case that the psychological and social human dimensions were not sufficiently valued in the pastoral care influenced by the "dialectical theology". But if the pendulum now swings to the other extreme, if the spiritual aspect of pastoral care is now largely ignored and interest is focused solely on the psychological and human aspect, it is all too easy to abandon the soil of the church's ministry altogether.

3.6. Empathy, identification with the neighbour, his or her unqualified and friendly acceptance, these certainly represent an important concern. Yet pastoral care cannot renounce the verbal proffer of the Word of God within conversation. To proclaim the Word of God certainly does not mean depriving the other person of freedom. To speak of the Gospel does not mean manipulating people and putting limits on their freedom to decide. On the contrary, the Word which we proclaim in pastoral care has the character of an invitation. It presents the neighbour with new possibilities and summons him or her into the freedom of the children of God.

3.7. However much we respect the sophisticated methods of conducting conversation in "therapeutic" and "counselling" pastoral care, and however much we may honour the serious efforts being undertaken to make the findings of communications research available for the pastoral encounter, we are still bound to say that we cannot allow this to obscure our clear recognition that evangelical pastoral care must also continue to have at its heart the proclamation of the good news - in word and deed - if it is not to surrender itself completely. 6)

The concern of the counselling movement makes it clear to us that the pastoral conversation is inseparable from the conditions of an event which is more than just a conversation. This can play some part in its success or else its failure.

6) see also: Werner Schütz, Seelsorge (Gütersloh: 1977).

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4. The content of pastoral proclamation

4.1. If then, in spite of the reservations of more recent critics, we insist on retaining proclamation as the central concept of pastoral care, the question arises of what constitutes its content. The Word of God comes as both promise and claim, as proffer and demand, as Gospel and as Law. Both aspects of the Word of God have their meaning and significance in pastoral proclamation.

4.2. If we human beings are not to miss our way, we need directives which are clear and unambiguous. Rightly understood, God's command is a summons to a meaningful life. Certainly, through this command, what is dark in our life is branded as dark, evil is called evil. Through the Law comes knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20). In a world in which the standards of ethical action are being increasingly relativized, the command of God indicates the way that is good for us. Amidst the confusions and chaos of our life we are pointed to an "original order" (W. Stählin). It is important for us to hear this "thou shalt" and so to receive clear signposts. Pastoral care will have to busy itself with providing these signposts. It will set the clear guidance of God over against the disorder and confusion. The commands of the Second Table of the Decalogue will therefore always have an important role to play in pastoral counselling: the relationship between the generations, reverence for life, the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage, the pursuit of a vocation and respect for the property of the individual, and fellowship, sincerity and respect for the dignity of the neighbour - these are all standards which we are not at liberty to remove. As pastors we must not deprive our parishioners of them; they must not be left without clear guidance from us. Pastoral guidance of this kind in respect of the divine command can be a very real help in practical living; instructive for the different areas of life; an aid to fidelity in the life of the family, the church, in daily work and in society. An example of how helpful and concrete such guidance can be is provided by John the Baptist in his "sermon to the social groups", giving rules of behaviour to the ordinary people and then, very specifically, to the tax-collectors and soldiers (Lk. 3:10-14). Nor will the pastor ever forget that the ultimate fulfilment of all commandments is in love. They point the way to the achievement of true neighbourliness.

4.3. We can understand why Asmussen differentiates between this establishment of the command by way of "spiritual guidance", on the one hand, and "pastoral care" in the full sense. But, it has to be insisted, while Law and Gospel are certainly to be distinguished, they cannot be divorced. This holds good for pastoral care, too. For if "spiritual guidance" is a matter of adjustment to particular social functions and roles, in the family, in the community, in the trade union, nation and state, if what is in question is the maintenance of an intelligent practice or continuance in fellowship, then this is in itself an introduction to a life of faith working by love.

4.4. The core of all pastoral action is certainly witness to the Gospel as the "power of God unto salvation to all who believe" (Rom. 1:16). As

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Luther says, pastoral care is primarily a matter of consolatio, a comforting, a paraklesis, but ultimately also of the great proffer of the glorious liberty of the children of God. Entry into this kingdom of freedom is the forgiveness of sin and guilt. The proper administration of the church's office of the keys cannot, therefore, be separated from the pastoral ministry. Although pastoral care as a mutua consolatio fratrum is also the business of the whole congregation and all its members, who practice it in virtue of the universal priesthood of all believers, it is also important, surely, that there should exist in the congregation the ministry to which the special mission of binding and loosing has been committed and whose bearers have at the same time as they are ordained been required to promise to maintain the secrecy of confession. In many cases the pastoral ministry is only completely fulfilled by the declaration of pardon, i.e. absolution as acquittal on Christ's authority.

4.5. The forgiveness of sins at the same time makes possible a new start. A new situation is created. A false and disastrous path does not have to be persisted in any longer. Conversion becomes possible and with it the return to the way of salvation, a way signposted by the commandments of God, a way which the Holy Spirit will help us to walk. The Spirit gives us the power to practice the "new obedience" and in gratitude to do what is right. The justification we experience in faith and which is declared to us in absolution constrains us to joyfully keep God's commandments. "Teach me thy way, O Lord; that I may walk in thy truth; unite my heart to fear thy name" (Ps. 86:11).

5. Pastoral proclamation and the contemporary situation

5.1. The church's pastoral ministry is exercised in a specific area and at a specific time. It must take account not only of its own contents but also of the social situation in which it is practiced.

5.2. For our churches today this situation is largely marked by the industrialization process and by increasing urbanization and mobility. The secularization of life as a whole which accompanies this process has been correctly described as resulting from the proclamation of the Gospel and the consequent desacralization of the world. Many recent sociological studies have described the changed awareness of life produced in us by this process (Dietrich von Oppen, Harvey Cox). The change in the social structure means for many people an increasing isolation and anonymity. Harvey Cox has described this process as an opportunity: modern industrial society offers individuals a high degree of personal freedom; they emerge from the old constraints characteristic of human life in pre-industrial times. Dietrich von Oppen speaks of the "personal era" in which people live today. The old social patterns which earlier served as "cocoons" for the individual, providing a sense of security (extended family, neighbourhood, professional group, manageable local community), now disappear. Individuals are thrown back on their own resources. Certainly this means increased personal responsibility and larger opportunities for individual expression. But it is impossible to ignore the fact that increasing anonymity leads at the same time to isolation

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and loneliness for many people today. The church must recognize this situation and take it seriously in its pastoral work.

5.3. It must at once be added, however, that patterns of life have from the beginning been developed in the Christian community which counteract the loss of individuality and a sense of isolation. The Christian community is anything but an anonymous mass. It is a manageable size for a community in which every member is known by name and has a clearly defined task. The Gospel reaches out to individuals, but far from isolating them, it brings them into a community of brothers and sisters.

5.4. In the Protestant church in Siebenbürgen, for example, special Christian patterns of life have been developed in the past which are based on comradeship. Within each congregation smaller and therefore more manageable "neighbourhoods" of from 12 to 25 families have been created, each following its own established patterns by which neighbourly assistance is governed. In addition to providing diaconal nursing care and support, these neighbourhoods also give attention to reconciliation and harmony. The duty to help and the readiness to help go hand in hand, and it can be said that individuals are accompanied and supported by such Christian patterns of life from the cradle to the grave, patterns of life which in a real sense are a concrete response within the congregation to the command to love the neighbour. These patterns of life, too, are being threatened by contemporary social changes, of course. But to the extent that they were called forth by the Gospel, and thus represent a response to God's call, they will continue, often transformed and adapted to new conditions, to provide a starting-point for the development of Christian community.

5.5. The pastoral ministry is directed to the individual. It takes the form of a personal approach with a view to providing personal guidance, help in living and help in believing. But the individual person addressed in this way does not remain alone. He is welcomed into a group to which others also belong, into the Christian community which gladly welcomes and accepts him. The fundamental question for contemporary pastoral care, therefore, is that of the living congregation. "Strengthen the congregation!" (W. Wilkens). This is an imperative which pastoral care cannot possibly evade today.

5.6. Pastoral ministry in our churches must be intensified in three directions:

- a) The first thing to be cultivated is the folk church heritage which still remains. Wherever Christian patterns of life and valuable church customs have been developed in the past which are still influential today, these in particular should be carefully maintained and adapted to suit new conditions.
- b) It will continue to be particularly important to provide constant loving, patient and understanding care for the many vulnerable and isolated people, especially the older members of the constantly shrinking smaller congregations.

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c) Spiritual care and support must also be provided for those whom contemporary mobility and urbanization have brought into an unknown country both socially and churchwise. The main concern here should be to develop a pastorally active and responsible community and to ensure that individuals are bonded into a fellowship, even if this fellowship is still incomplete and still in process of emerging. Assistants will be needed to help the ordained pastoral workers who are engaged in the ministry of church visitation and therefore in the front line of pastoral care in the full sense of the term.

As more and more members of the congregation perform this or similar ministries, the stronger the congregation will become and the greater the comfort and strength it will be able to afford to individuals. Real membership of the congregation means sharing in its work and so in God's work, too. The Christian life cannot be lived in the singular number but only as part of the plural "we" of the congregation of which Christians are members, whose services they join in celebrating and whose ministry they share. In this light, the new ways leading to new forms of fellowship are to be endorsed: house groups, public discussion of the Bible, Bible study groups and biblical teaching, especially study with children and young people, with men and women, and with the old people. This ministry in the new church landscape is performed in the confidence that the one Gospel continues to offer the help in living which every individual needs, even in, especially in, this changed world. The proclamation of the Gospel will breach anonymity and isolation. Every individual at heart is longing for this to happen. Hence the need for this personal pastoral approach, this pastoral proclamation, today especially, and also in a new way!

6. The continuing task and the promise accompanying it

6.1. We have been entrusted with the universal commission to proclaim the Gospel to all human beings. There are various ways of proclaiming the Gospel. Pastoral care is and will always be a special form of proclamation.

6.2. In a time when institutions are increasingly entering into a process of transformation, the personal approach also becomes increasingly important. More than ever before, perhaps, it may be the moment especially for pastoral care.

6.3. The church must therefore exercise this ministry in a worthy, joyful and responsible way, in the confidence that the "good Shepherd" seeks today, too, to gather, strengthen and deliver his people. To carry out this work of deliverance, he needs faithful assistants and collaborators in his community. We shall constantly pray, therefore, that the Lord may send labourers into his harvest (Mt. 9:38).

LECTURE VI

GYULA NAGY

PROCLAMATION THROUGH SERVICE TO THE INDIVIDUAL AND TO SOCIETY

- Service, a mission and a way of life for the church in Europe

The church - what is it for?

The celebration of the 450th anniversary of the Augustana Confession has made us ask ourselves again: What is the church for? Has the church of Jesus Christ still a mission, an indispensable service to perform at the close of the twentieth century, in this atomic and cosmic age? And if so, what are its principal tasks?

Very diverse opinions have been expressed on this subject, not only outside the church but intra muros ecclesiae. Unfortunately, it is not possible for us now to collect and analyze these opinions. But we do have an inescapable duty, as the people of God and as a church of the Reformation in Europe today, ever and again to examine the question and to answer it for ourselves.

The church in the world - the church for the world

My first proposition is as follows: The purpose of the existence and mission of the church of Jesus Christ, the most profound purpose of the incarnation, is still to uphold the world, which was created by God and has been corrupted and mortally menaced by sin, so as to make it again God's world (katallagé - sótēria). In other words, the church's mission is the redemption and healing of this world.

The church is thus not an enemy or rival of the world but is itself a part of the world. It is not out of the world but stands firmly in and for the world. It is in the church, in this quite specific part of the world, that the dynamic forces of the Kingdom of God work through Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit, to make our sinful corrupt world once again God's good unbroken world.

The church is itself the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. And at the same time it is "God's instrument" for the renewal and healing of the world. This is the most profound meaning of its mission - to be a "church for others" (Bonhoeffer), a church for the world.

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Transmitting the Gospel - the central aim of the church

The true centre of the church's life and task is thus the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and this "euangelion" (good news) is the fact that God loves us. The ultimate ground of our human existence is the infinite love of God in Jesus Christ, through which we are forgiven and sustained. This above everything else is the "essence of Christianity" - not a theory, nor a philosophy, nor yet a system of morality (a new ethical law), but the new personal relationship of sinful humanity to the merciful God, who "justifies" the sinner and makes him righteous.

This is the "evangelical heart" of the Augustana Confession - the famous fourth "basic article" concerning justification. This evangelical centre can still preserve the church from losing the meaning of its existence. The church derives its life from the Gospel and lives for the Gospel.

Transmitting the Gospel through preaching and the sacraments

The Augustana Confession emphasizes that it is through preaching and the sacraments that the Gospel, the work of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit for the redemption of the world, is transmitted. The Gospel does its work through the proclamation of God's word (Law and Gospel) and through the administration of the sacraments.

Transmitting the Gospel through service ("diakonia")

There can be no true biblical proclamation of the word of reconciliation, and no administration of the "visible Gospel" in baptism and eucharist, without the service of love for others (agapé) of which the Bible speaks. In this conference on the theme of proclamation, it must be stressed that the transmission of the Gospel, which is the church's task in the modern world, is not done only through the sermon, the preaching of the word and the sacraments, but also by "proclamation through Christian life" and service (agapé).

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is at one and the same time the spoken word and the lived action! Proclamation through the word and "proclamation through Christian life" are in fact not two distinct activities going on in the church side by side; they are interlocked. They are two different aspects of one and the same Gospel. The church's unceasing work of Christian service and love opens the way for the preaching of the word, and is also its accompaniment and its fruit.

The "more excellent way of love"

The distinctive path of the church in the world is therefore "the more excellent way of love" (hodos kath'hyperbolén; 1 Cor.12:31).

On this way our Lord, the great Diakonos, went before us to the cross, and he calls us, his people and his church, to follow this way today. "For the Son of man also came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a

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ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Jesus' followers, therefore - and not only his disciples but also his church - cannot limit themselves to personal faith and prayer. The Christian life, the life of the church in the world, is the continual incarnation and conversion of personal faith into a helping, healing love which transforms individuals and the world in every one of the concrete, socio-economic, political and cultural contexts in which we live.

The twofold danger: proclamation without service - service without proclamation

The Gospel is a message, at the same time word and deed, word and service, combined and not side by side. It addresses itself to both the inner and the outer man, the whole man; it heals and restores not only our hearts but our lives and the world about us.

It is extremely important to note that when Jesus was questioned by the disciples of John the Baptist as to what his mission was, he replied by referring to the dynamic working of the Gospel in the world: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offence at me" (Matt.11:4-6). The Gospel is no ineffectual and empty word but a powerful and dynamic word, calling us to the service of God's love in this world.

The most significant characteristic of Jesus as a person was indeed this inner unity of the proclamation of the Gospel with power and authority, with self-sacrificing perfect love, even to the cross.

In the course of its long history, the church of Jesus Christ has always been a living church at times when these two aspects - proclamation and loving service - existed together. Whenever this inner unity was lost, the life of the church declined. When the church strove only for the purity of its doctrine and preaching, the fires of the Inquisition burned and God's love was forgotten. But when the church turned to one-sided activism in the endeavour to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, it lost sight not only of the true word but also of the love that springs from faith.

The greatest danger for the church and its members today is that of breaking this unity of God's word - the unity of proclamation by the word and by loving service. There is still a certain theological conservatism in our churches, an otherworldliness which gives more weight to personal inward faith and the preaching of the word than to loving Christian service "in this sinful world". On the other hand, a sort of Christian "activism" is often found which tends to despise and forget personal faith, prayer and the preaching of the Gospel.

Without active and untiring service the church's proclamation remains an empty noise (cf. 1.Cor.13:1). And without the proclamation of the Gospel

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the church's social action loses its fundamental roots and its Christian character.

What the universal church needs everywhere today is a "proclamation of the Gospel" which serves and a "service which proclaims the Gospel". I can see no more urgent task for theology and the church today than to strive unceasingly for this indivisible unity between faith, proclamation, theology and the active service of Christian love at all levels of life.

The "theological meaning" of service

From the theological point of view, service for others is an integral part of the task of the Christian community and has a "legitimate meaning" in relation to all three articles of faith.

In the theology of creation, we are "workers together with God" and share the task of upholding and preserving the created world.

In christology and soteriology, the basic elements in the task of followers of Jesus Christ are those we see in his ministry - proclamation of the good news, and self-giving, serving love. The sinner is indeed justified by faith alone, but faith must be followed by active and serving Christian love. Faith without love is nothing (St.Paul in 1 Cor.13ff).

In pneumatology, the Holy Spirit sanctifies and restores us not for an introverted and self-sufficient life but for a life of love and devotion to others. The sanctification comprises the whole of existence - body, mind, spirit and the world around us.

I must frankly admit that as a Lutheran theologian I feel more at home in the first two of these fields. In the course of the past nine years, I have had some opportunity to participate in ecumenical dialogue with other churches, particularly in Europe. And it has been my experience that we Lutherans, without giving up the "christological centre" of our theology, have still a lot to learn from other churches regarding a "theology of the Holy Spirit" and a "theology of sanctification" - especially from the Orthodox and Free Churches, and also from the new Roman Catholic theology. We need to ponder much more deeply and broadly on the person and the gifts of the Holy Spirit!

A "theology of service" ("diakonia")

It is no secret that we in the Lutheran Church in Hungary have in the past twenty-five years been following a theological tendency which we call "theology of diakonia".

This direction of our theological thinking has often been misunderstood or misinterpreted. Sometimes it has been thought to be a new form of "ethical theology", stressing only the element of love for the neighbour and neglecting faith and the forgiveness of sins - the central message of the Gospel. And it has quite frequently been suspected of considering the skandalon of faith, of the cross of Christ, as unacceptable in an environment

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of non-Christian ideology, and for that reason of putting service for others, for society, at the centre.

Nothing could be more false than such a "half theology", such a truncated Gospel. Even our church has had to learn anew every day, in the new context of the socialist society, that it lives only by the forgiving grace and love of God. But it has also learned that Jesus Christ is a "Lord" who "serves" - as the great Diakonos he gave his life for many and called his disciples to follow the same way of serving, self-giving love.

This "theological line", derived from the essence of the biblical message, is found in other forms in other parts of the world. Here I mention only the theology of the "church for the poor" which is given such an important place today in theological thought in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In our own context, it takes the form of a "theology of service". It is not our intention to add to the number of different "theologies" so fashionable nowadays. We do not want to instruct others, and above all we do not want to offer this "theological line" as the solution for "all the church's problems". We merely want to testify to our own experience and understanding of God's grace. This "theology of service" helps us to fight against our own weakness, against a complacent Christianity limited to church attendance on Sundays; it requires us to declare our faith day by day by helping and serving others without expecting to be thanked, and always to do so in the name of the great Diakonos who gave his life for us all.

Finally I would like to sum up the most vital and basic theological concern in the "theology of loving service" as follows:

It is completely false to present as alternatives a Christianity of "personal inner faith" versus an active "social Christianity". For the Christian and for the church the two are inseparably one. We must have both a living, inward, existential, trusting faith in Christ and also, as a fruit and consequence of this faith, an active, serving attitude in all areas of our personal and social life.

Serving the individual and society

The diaconal character of faith in Christ is manifested in many forms of loving service for the whole person - for his physical well-being, his spiritual life, and his reconciliation with God the Creator, Redeemer and Holy Spirit.

But people are not just individuals; they exist as parts of various forms of community - the family, working-group, nation and humanity itself. Thus true service to individuals is always at the same time service to the community in which they live - that is, to their families, their working and cultural groups, their societies, their nations, and to humanity as a whole.

The specific service of the community of Jesus Christ is now as always to

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give our love and care without stint to those about us who are in need. It is the task of the congregation and the church at all levels - local, regional and worldwide - to relieve human need and human suffering through this "service in love".

What is "service in love"?

"Service in love" takes the form of acts of Christian love to help the individual sufferer and society. It is the innumerable "little good deeds" of everyday life within the family, at work and in social contacts. We remember Jesus' words, "the least of these my brothers" (Matt.25:40): the hungry, the thirsty, the widows and orphans, those who are troubled and heavy-laden; and also those who are alone and forgotten by society, who hunger and thirst not so much for food and drink but for the warmth of human contact, for love and understanding; people who have lost the meaning of their lives. There are many other less obvious forms of human suffering. All these people are our "neighbours", entrusted to our personal care and to the care of the Christian community. Jesus draws near to us in them, and draws near to them in us.

"Service through changing structures"

We know perfectly well, however, that our life is not only a network of "inter-personal relationships" and contacts with one another. The personal fate of the individual is not only affected by individual decisions and actions but is to a certain extent pre-determined by the socio-economic and political structures in which we live.

For instance, in a society where a small minority is firmly in control of power, material goods and cultural values, the unjust social structure determines in advance that millions of human beings will go hungry and suffer and be ignorant, and we cannot help them much by our personal care and concern, by "service in love". We have to do everything we can for them, but when we share our bread with one or a hundred others, there are still tens of thousands who go hungry.

During the past nine years, I have travelled a great deal in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In the slums of Latin America, in the streets of Calcutta and other huge Indian cities, in the famine areas of Africa and elsewhere, I have seen indescribable and unforgettable suffering and the depths of human misery.

The only possible way to overcome this unspeakable misery in the "two-thirds world", with its diseased, starving and desperate people, hundreds of millions of them, is by a fundamental socio-economic and political transformation which will change the inhuman and unjust structures in these countries, and alter the entire distribution of material goods and spiritual values in the world. This is a task which is extremely difficult but which we cannot evade in the world as it is today. Our Lord himself, who is Lord of the poor and the suffering, calls us to be on the side of the poor and miserable, and to show

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our love for others also through this form of service. Participation in transforming outdated and unjust social, economic and international structures constitutes a very large and important dimension of Christian service to humanity and society.

Service through "forming a new mentality" in society

To transform the outward structures of our lives and to establish new and more just structures requires expert knowledge and a high level of ethical, altruistic behaviour. All change in social structures must be accompanied by a new human, social mind set. This social, human modification of the "internal structures" of people and of society requires a continuous process of education, of "mentality formation", of "sensitization" to the interests and welfare of other people and of society as a whole.

If the church is truly the community of Jesus Christ who gave his life for us all, both it and its members will radiate selflessness, self-dedication, faithfulness to the call, and willingness to put the interests of society before self-interest. The church, as an "ethical powerhouse" diffusing the power of neighbourly love and humanity to other social groupings - the family, the work-group, the social and international community - is serving Jesus Christ, humanity and society thereby just as much as through "service in love" or through striving to bring into being more just structures.

But for this the first and most fundamental requirement is that the church be re-born every day through the Holy Spirit. For without this daily rebirth the church will not be able to perform its loving service to bring about structural change and the transformation of people's minds.

A "serving life-style for the church"

The awareness of these three types of service leads us to speak of a new necessary "serving life-style for the church". Basically this means that, together with and inseparable from the proclamation of the word, baptism and the eucharist, there should be greater emphasis on the proclamation of the Gospel and its practice in the lives of the congregation of Jesus Christ.

This call for a "serving life-style for the church" and a "serving life-style" for Christians is particularly significant in Europe. For hundreds of years, the churches here represented the "governing élite" of society possessing power, influence and wealth. "Ecclesia praecedat" - the church has precedence! - this maxim was still generally accepted fifty years ago in my home country. For example, if the church - in our case the powerful Roman Catholic Church - objected to the appointment of someone to a high position of state, his career was brought to a halt and he was not appointed, even if he was the best candidate. This "Constantinian age" of the alliance of throne and altar ended in many parts of Europe with the disappearance of the throne. Does the church look back to it with regret? If it does, it has not understood the Bible. Because the churches did not of their own will give up this privileged "special status" in society, our Lord had to teach them by the hard lessons of history that wealth, power and splendour are not

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the distinguishing marks of the church of Jesus Christ, the Lord, the Servant. The church's true way still lies, as it did in the first three centuries of its history, in humility and poverty, in simplicity; and its wealth is the priceless treasure of the Gospel and good works of faith, service in Christian love.

Have the churches of Europe learned this lesson - so necessary though sometimes so bitter - of this most recent epoch of their history? Are we in Europe, on this continent where the church became so immensely powerful and wealthy, honestly ready to give up power and glory and to assume the modest place of the servant, faithful to our humble, serving Lord? Are we ready to learn the lesson of the church's history in this twentieth century, and, without being compelled, voluntarily and in faith, to go forward on this way?

An important study

I must say that I know of no more urgent and momentous theological task for the Lutheran churches - indeed for all the churches in Europe - than to make a thoroughgoing biblical and historical study on a practical basis of what should be the proper form and role of the church in Europe and throughout the world in the twentieth century. Europe and the whole world have basically changed. Are not many of our churches in Europe still living in the nineteenth century? Have they not yet learned "God's lesson" from the recent history of the church? The enormous historical revolutions of this century, the terrific developments in science and technology, the ever-growing poverty of the "two-thirds world" which cries to heaven, and the danger of nuclear destruction of the created world which threatens everyone of us - what do all these mean for the life and service of the church of Jesus Christ now at the end of this century?

Perhaps we have very little time to undertake such necessary new thinking in the church. But I cannot imagine anything more important for the churches to do in preparation for the next LWF Assembly (to be held for the first time in a socialist country), nor any theme more worthy of that meeting, than this serious theological study.

Five particularly challenging tasks for the "service" of the churches in Europe

To be more clear and concrete, I should like to mention five tasks, among many other forms of service, which present a particular challenge for the churches of this continent.

Firstly: the service of the churches and of all Christians in view of the growing danger of total destruction of the world in nuclear war. We are living under the "sword of Damocles" of an unimaginable atomic holocaust which may destroy humanity. The crazy arms race, the competition for new and ever more terrible weapons systems, is swallowing up the daily bread of hundreds of millions and killing our hopes for the future of humanity.

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Is there any more vital service for the churches and Christian people than to work against this mortal madness by all the means in their power?

Secondly: Are we not as European churches challenged by the growing misery of the developing countries - the "two-thirds world"?

We in Europe, even if we are not all on the same level of affluence, are the privileged "rich brothers" of the great poor family of humanity. The practical aid programs of church bodies, including the Lutheran World Federation, have certainly relieved much poverty and suffering, and those programs must continue. But as Christians have we not the power and the duty to do more? Ought not the churches to be the "public conscience" of Europe, never losing sight of the hundreds of millions who are in need, working resolutely for a more just distribution of the good things of the world in the interests of the poor? Ought not Christians in Europe to be in the vanguard of the fight for a simpler life-style in our societies, with all their prosperity and extravagant affluence, and set an example in their own lives? We have to ask our consciences and our faith whether we really do love the poor of this world!

Thirdly: We all know that the racial problem is extremely dangerous and explosive in the world today. The churches and Christians ought everywhere to give a definite "No" by word and deed to all forms of racial discrimination. Christians in Europe have a particular responsibility, for it was in Europe that the idea of "racial superiority" arose, the fruit of which was the death and suffering of countless millions. There are millions of non-whites living in Europe who are discriminated against, and who need the services of the churches.

Fourthly and fifthly: Within a narrower circle, I want to remind you of the responsibility for service among the churches themselves. Europe's churches have a special responsibility toward their smaller sister churches (and by "sister churches" I mean not merely small Lutheran churches but all the other scattered churches living in daily difficulty and poverty). The churches of our continent must also never forget their responsibility before God to pray for and send assistance to the small and poor Lutheran churches on other continents, and to remember all the other churches of Jesus Christ which are minority and diaspora churches. All those who know anything about the life and problems of these churches cannot limit their concern to the narrow bounds of their own church, but will everyday open wide their windows in prayer and true dedication. As churches we have to serve one another in love!

The future - a "serving church"?

Many theologians believe that the church, as it loses its "Constantinian context", will take on again its original character, a "serving life-style".

It is certain that in the course of this transformation from an "upper-class church" to a "serving church" the time schedules and structural changes will vary

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greatly. In Europe there are some churches where these problems are of lesser importance because the forces of tradition and authority are still strong in society. But there are a large number of others where traditional forms of church life are losing ground under the blows of secularization.

What is the new structure of a "serving church" likely to be? There are many different ideas and forecasts about this, and I will mention only a few of them in closing.

1. Many theologians think that the church of the future will be a much smaller but dynamic community. Instead of being a great institution, it will have the character of a more flexible fellowship.
2. Others believe that a "serving church" will make much less hierarchical distinction between ordained ministers and unordained members of the congregation. The Christian's service in society and the local congregation will become more important.
3. A "serving church" will be much more ecumenical than today's church. The fellowship of all Christians will surely be made deeper by permanent dialogue between the churches. Perhaps the churches, facing the growing challenges of the world on questions of ethics, will reach greater fellowship with one another through cooperation on ethical issues.
4. A "serving church" will depend more on its faith, without other external supports. At the same time, it will be much more open to the world, maintaining a continuous dialogue and collaboration on ethical questions with the non-Christians and non-believers of secularized society.

All these are just forecasts. But what is certain is that the church of the future, if it is to remain a living church, must be rooted firmly in the faith of the Gospel and at the same time be strong in love and service for the world.

As the life of the church becomes more service oriented, there will be inevitable consequences at every level: consequences for worship, for Christian education, for the structures of the congregation and the church as a whole, and for ecumenical fellowship between churches. This process is only just beginning.

We may go forward along this difficult path in hope, following Jesus, who said: "Which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves?... But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27).

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Questions for discussion

1. Is Christian service in love only participation in the upholding of God's creation (Article 1), or is it also participation in the service of Jesus Christ, in the proclamation of the Gospel (Article 2)?
2. How can we relate the call to proclamation and loving service more closely with our faith in the Holy Spirit (Article 3)?
3. What dangers threaten the church if proclamation of the word and service for others are separated or given unequal emphasis? How can these dangers be avoided?
4. Is it not necessary today to return to the "serving character" and "serving life-style" of the early church? What does such a "serving life-style" mean in precise and concrete terms in society?
5. What are the most urgent tasks for the Christian service of love to individuals in our present societies?
6. What are the most urgent tasks for the Christian service of love in and for the communities in which we live (family, work-group, society, international relations, etc.)?
7. Have the European churches special tasks of service vis-à-vis one another and in relation to the peoples and churches of the developing countries?
8. What might be the consequences for the churches' worship, for Christian education, for congregational structures and for ecumenical cooperation of a "proclamation of the Gospel which serves" and a "service which proclaims the Gospel?

LECTURE VII

HELmut ZEDDIES

PROCLAMATION IN SERVICE FOR PEACE

1. Peace for survival

A story is told of S. Marschak, the Soviet writer of children's books, that he was once watching children of six or seven years of age playing. "What are you playing?" he asked them. The children replied: "We are playing at war". "How can you possibly play at war?" said Marschak. "You know that war is bad. You should play at peace." "That's a good idea", said the children. Then there was a silence, whispering, and again silence. At last one child spoke up: "Granddad, how do you play at peace?"

For children, play is a serious matter; through play they master the realities of their lives. And this little story is eloquent of the way children experience our adult world. War is an ever-present element in our world; the danger of death and destruction weighs even on the children; they are confronted by the prospect of their own annihilation. In such conditions, peace, which they would love to play at, is an abstraction. They may perhaps be able to imagine peace under the protection of soldiers and weapons, but such a peace, overshadowed by an army, would be little more than the absence of war. Is it just that children have not enough imagination, or is it that the behaviour and example of their elders fail to give concreteness to the idea of peace? It is no use to us or to them merely to talk about peace. What matters is the way we think about peace, what we are willing to do for it, and how we serve it by our lives.

1.1. After the appalling experience of two world wars in this century, it is obvious that armed conflict is not an isolated problem in itself; it is one aspect of the overall problem of peace-keeping and depends on it. The vital problem is not war but peace; and peace is something more and something other than the interval between wars. Humanity absolutely must have peace if it is to survive.

An almost unimaginable potential of destructive weapons is being piled up all over the earth today. NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries together possess over 60,000 nuclear explosive warheads, estimated by the Stockholm Institute for Peace Research as having a nuclear explosive force of 13,000 megatons. And that is more than one million times the size of the Hiroshima

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bomb. A Type B-52 aircraft can carry up to 20 missiles, each with triple warheads. That is to say, each single aircraft could wipe out six large cities of a million inhabitants or 60 smaller cities.

In 1970 the world spent 200 billion dollars on armaments. In 1977 the figure had reached 350 billion - half a million dollars a minute. An average of over eight tons of conventional explosives exists for every single inhabitant of the earth, children and old people included.

Nothing could show more plainly the absolutely grotesque proportions reached by the spiral of fear and deterrence. It is patently absurd, because the planet can only be destroyed once, while the existing explosive potential is several times the quantity needed to do it. Peace has therefore become absolutely vital if humanity is to survive. It is the development of sophisticated weapons, according to C.F. von Weizsäcker¹), that has made peace indispensable. But peace cannot be ensured by deterrence. For deterrence cannot guarantee security and overcome people's fear. Deterrent threats only cause more fear and lead to an ever-greater potential of annihilation.

This continuing spiral is a permanent threat. Only those who have not understood what is at stake can blandly accept this fatal development. Or is it a feeling of helplessness, that nothing can be done? Or a primal optimism, a belief that the worst will never happen? There is growing concern among the experts that nuclear warheads might be utilized unintentionally through accident or human error. The risk, they believe, has quadrupled in the past 20 years. So there is danger of an accidental war as well as of a deliberate one. This is another reason why the strategy of deterrence has to be replaced by a strategy for ensuring peace.

1.2. As already said, peace is not merely the absence of war. It is not enough simply to avoid armed conflict, if the causes that might lead to the use of force to settle conflicts are not removed. This was pointed out at the recent LWF Executive Committee meeting by Bishop Kibira, president of the LWF. He said: "There can be no peace where violation of human rights in any form is the game of the day. People who are discriminated against politically, socially, racially or on grounds of their religion or minority status in society, tend to resort to violence as the only way to attract attention for their grievances."

Peace which only serves one's own need for security could be a peace obtained at the expense of others. Peace could for instance be to the political and economic disadvantage of peoples whose development and political independence are frustrated by the prevailing world economic order.

Peace must always promote social justice; otherwise it is a false peace.

Because of this interdependence, peace can now only be thought of in terms of the whole world. Although wars may be geographically limited and thus in

1) See his address on The Conditions of Peace (Berlin: Union Verlag, 1965)

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a certain sense local, there is no longer any such thing as a local peace. Bishop Kibira was referring to this interdependence when he reminded the churches that it was their duty to understand the basic causes of the lack of peace in the world and to work to eliminate those causes.

1.3. "The churches" - this brings us to another aspect of our theme. When it is a question of proclamation in the service of peace, it is the churches who are addressed. Nowadays, we have almost come to take it for granted that peace is also a theme for a conference of Lutheran churches. But well into the present century Lutheran theology was concerned less with peace than with war. The question was whether a Christian could or should take part in war and, if so, in what circumstances. The so-called doctrine of the just war was intended originally to set limits to war by reminding those who wage war that they are answerable to God for what they do. But the actual effect of this doctrine was different. The doctrine of the just war was misused. It served to justify wars. Its weakness was inherent in its approach: it sought to sharpen a responsible attitude to war instead of sharpening responsibility for peace and so for the elimination of war altogether.

That precisely this is the task before us is now accepted by the churches without question. That the "necessity of peace" is prescribed for us as the only remedy if humanity is to survive is a truism which has enabled the churches to see their own responsibility to serve peace, whatever others may do, and to serve it in a manner consonant with their own message. Peace has become a vital theme not only in the congregations but also in the discussions between the churches as well as between churches and governments. It is hardly possible for decision-making bodies of such ecumenical organizations as the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches or the Conference of European Churches to meet today without peace also being on the agenda. Nor should we omit to mention the Christian Peace Conference which also recognizes its responsibility for this task of peace.

2. The New Testament witness to peace

By its very task and content, proclamation is made possible by and at the same time bound to the witness of Holy Scripture. One never ceases to be astonished at how often the Bible speaks of peace. In the space of this address it is not possible to illustrate this in detail; I will just draw attention to certain salient features of the message of peace in the New Testament.

2.1. The salvation brought by Jesus of Nazareth, the coming of the Kingdom of God into the world, is proclaimed to be peace. When Jesus sent the apostles forth (Matt.10 and Luke 10), he charged them to go into houses with a peace greeting. That was nothing unusual in Palestine; it was the normal, everyday form of greeting, yet more than just a polite formula. When Jesus Christ came into the world, the wish expressed in the greeting became a reality: "Peace be to this house... The Kingdom of God has come

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near to you" (Luke 10:5-9). The peace salutation of the disciples offers salvation in Jesus' name to their listeners. The disciples themselves are given divine power, and therefore their rejection has eschatological significance. If anyone refuses the gift of peace, it returns to him who brings it. So it is indeed the Kingdom of God which enters the house with the greeting of peace pronounced by the messengers. It is not their own peace that the disciples bring, but God's peace which has come into the world with the coming of the Kingdom.

What was proclaimed in this apparently so simple yet extremely effective way, contains far-reaching theological affirmations, therefore. God's action in history is taken quite seriously and realistically here. God does not leave the world to its own devices; he is not content to be merely a spectator. When he considers the time is ripe, God intervenes. What he does does not happen without human participation; it does not ignore human beings yet is certainly not dependent on their decision. God is and remains his own master. His action cannot be replaced by human action. Nor does God act only through human beings as his instruments. The danger of that would be to make it too easy to claim that human actions were God's decisions. In point of fact, God also acts in quite a direct and unexpected way. He intervenes, so to speak, in history.

In Jesus Christ, God establishes that peace which men are powerless to make. In so doing, God does not turn against men but rather inclines towards them. Human beings with all their fears and guilt, privileges and injustices, oppression and persecution, hunger and poverty, receive the gift of the fullness of life which not only satisfies all needs but brings with it an entirely new perspective. This new perspective can be simply and comprehensively expressed by the word "peace". We have to be alert to the signs of this peace established by God. But probably we shall only be able to see them if we do not close our eyes to the signs of judgment of our own failures.

Human beings are in every case the recipients in respect of this action of God in his gracious turning towards them. Their role is that of God's beneficiaries and servants: all they can do is to respond obediently to this. What God does is antecedent to their action, nullifying it perhaps or changing its direction. We should also remember that many things in life are beyond our control. Certainly the peace which God creates is not something which we can create. This is not exactly easy for us to accept and to attest to others in a world dominated by the conviction that humanity is in principle omnicompetent and dependent on no one else.

2.2. A further proof that the peace salutation on the lips of the disciples or even of the Lord himself is a concentrated expression of a central element of the biblical witness is the frequency with which it is used. We not only find it in the synoptic gospels but also in the resurrection narratives of the fourth gospel. Almost every letter in the New Testament, whether written by Paul or by someone else, either begins or ends with the peace salutation. It even found its way into the worship of the primitive Christian

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community and has retained its place down to our own day in the liturgy of all the Christian churches.

By the power of God, therefore, peace has dawned in the midst of this world, which, while it longs for peace, is not really interested in the peace of God. The question is whether the peace of God which has dawned in the midst of this world will mean much to it. For it has as yet only dawned and is still small and inconspicuous, hardly perceptible, almost powerless, as the parables of the Kingdom of God constantly emphasize. It is nevertheless a genuine, real and effective peace. The New Testament leaves us in no doubt on this score either. God's peace is eschatological, just as his Kingdom and salvation in Christ are eschatological. In other words, it is not just a hope, not just a preempting of the future, but already really present even if still hidden and not evident to all. The New Testament passages which speak of a cosmological peace ¹⁾ regard peace as filling both heaven and earth, therefore. But we have to receive it, and this is only possible in faith. For the cosmic struggle with the power of sin, death and the devil is not yet over. Nor is God's peace to be had, therefore, without a struggle and without the cross. ²⁾

The end is still to come. But the New Testament knows that God will have the last word. He is creating a new world, whenever this may come and however it may come about. The decisive thing has already taken place. Christ's coming into the world has transformed the world. He is the eschatological turning point in time. The only thing still outstanding is the final stage, the ultimate consummation, the visible Kingdom, complete justice, the fullness of peace. This is beyond our human contriving. When this is made quite plain, it not only reminds us of our human limits but also relieves us of the pressure of having to achieve in human history what God has reserved to himself for his Kingdom.

2.3. But what is expected of us is that we should live by the peace of God which we have received. In other words: "The peace which we cannot create enables us to work for the peace which it is our responsibility to create" (C.F. von Weizsäcker). This is the theological basis of the ethical summons which is found in the New Testament. Even then, our action will still be subject to limits, bound to and limited by time and of limited validity. It is action bounded by human insight and human capacity. It is also action within the transitory as yet unredeemed world. It can have no abiding value, therefore, let alone any eternal value.

Our peace service belongs to what Bonhoeffer called the "penultimate" realm. It is subject to the eschatological proviso, which results from the ultimate fact that Christ has come into the world and proclaimed the Kingdom of God. The penultimate is not the ultimate, but this is not to say it is a matter of indifference. What happens in the penultimate is a "preparation of the

1) Cf. Luke 2:14; 2:30-32; Rom.8:33-39; Eph.2:14-16; Col.2:13-15.

2) Cf. Rom.5:3-5

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way for the ultimate" 1), just as Jesus concerned himself with people's physical needs, came close to them to heal and help them and by so doing opened for them the way of salvation. The "ultimate is not cut off from the penultimate, is not a transcendent world, but is the future prospect on which life and action in the penultimate are focused". 2)

Our Christian service for peace acquires here its foundation and its limit. When the penultimate is assigned the status of the ultimate, when for example the Kingdom of God is supposed to be achieved by some system of government within this world or even by some earthly kingdom of peace, Christians will have to say No, if they are to be faithful to their Lord. But they know that their efforts for peace are not rendered superfluous by or unconnected with the ultimate but are in fact related specifically to it because they indeed live by the eschatological peace which God has made with them. While their action is still in the penultimate, it is directed towards the ultimate which Christ established as our hope by his coming.

3. Witness to peace and the service of peace

But what use is the peace of God to us in this contemporary world? More precisely, how is it to be related to the efforts of the politicians, to the work of the experts, to the longing we all have for détente and disarmament, security and confidence to be achieved and, therefore, peace? "The peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil.4:7). With this apostolic salutation of peace, the Christian congregation is sent out from the sermon to daily life. But what significance has this word of peace for their daily life where rational action is precisely what is called for? An unbridgeable gulf seems to open up here.

3.1. Ultimately, however, the only way in which we can speak of peace is by attesting what is said in the scriptures. If proclamation in the service of peace were not the continuation of what the Bible says about peace, it would lack legitimacy. It is quite impossible to make proclamation our servant, not even in the interests of peace, if it is not the service which it must itself perform in response to God's command and promise. The study of the New Testament has convinced us that there is such a command to proclaim the message of peace as salvation in Jesus Christ.

But proclamation is always organically related to a particular context and is addressed to a quite specific situation. In his Word God is seeking human beings where they are. This is why Paul became a Jew to the Jews, a Greek to the Greeks. How do we become bringers of peace to those who hunger for peace today? For another feature of the situation of our own times, of

1) Heinz Eduard Tödt, Biblische Botschaft und moderne Friedenskonzepte. Hermeneutische Probleme des Verhältnisses von Bibellexegese und kirchlicher Friedensforschung, Eschatologie und Frieden in Biblischen Texten, ed. Gerhard Liedke. Band II, Texte und Materialien der Forschungsstätte der Evangelischen Studiengemeinschaft, Reihe A, Nr. 7 (Heidelberg: 1978).

2) Ibid.

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which we have already spoken in detail, is this: many people in the world are moved by a profound desire for peace, and by fear due to the great insecurity of this peace. But at the same time they are unable to make much use of the fact that God has already established his peace with humanity. They find the biblical language alien to them. This is where the task of proclamation as service for peace begins. Credible witnesses are needed. It is not enough to know how to handle ancient texts. Witness to peace is inconceivable unless our lives tangibly demonstrate that this peace really rules our lives and governs us in the midst of our unpeaceful world. To quote Bishop Kibira again: "There can be no peace where people are not equipped for it. People have to have peace in themselves before they can radiate it externally for the benefit of others."

3.2. To spread peace means bringing it into the tensions which hamper corporate human life, making its validity felt in the conflicts which need to be resolved among people. Détente is probably difficult because people still have too little peace to bring with them into this process, because peace, instead of being the starting-point, is the end-product they hope for. But peace can only be achieved if those who require it of others are themselves equipped for peace.

From the witness of the New Testament, we know that God's peace is not to be equated with human efforts for peace. But it is equally clear that God's peace is not one which is reserved to the world to come but is meant to invade and spread in this world as well. It is present above all where people do whatever they can do for peace, because it does not depend on their work for the world but on God's. In the reconciling work of Jesus Christ, God has made peace with the world.

When Christians champion peace, therefore, their witness is characterized by this reconciliation which establishes a new fellowship with God but also of human beings with one another. To engage in the "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor.5:18) brings its own risks with it. Those who do so may be suspected of sympathizing with the "enemy", of identifying themselves with his cause instead of reinforcing their own. Even churches which live in different social systems are not safe from this suspicion when they proclaim "the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor.5:19).

There is of course a mistaken use of the word which distorts the meaning of reconciliation, taking it to mean mere appeasement ("peace at any price"), the blurring of conflicts, shoddy compromises designed to deceive others and yet in the end changing nothing. God's reconciliation is no cheap placation. Nor does reconciliation mean abolishing conflicts but dealing with them so that the real aim is not to destroy the opponent but a new fellowship, i.e. peace, with him. The result of reconciliation is to look at differences objectively and to deal with them in a more human way. "While not removing the differences, reconciliation does remove the enmity in them". 1)

1) Werner Krusche, Servants of God, Servants of Men - address to the Assembly of the Conference of European Churches, Nyborg VI; 26th April - 3 May 1971.

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Those who seek peace through reconciliation can never agree that the opponent is the personification of evil; they refuse to think and act in terms of a merciless friend-or-enemy formula. Peace can never be against somebody, only with somebody. And somebody has to take the risky but unavoidable first step. As Christians we know that through reconciliation first steps can be taken. And because we know that God made a decisive first step towards mankind in Jesus Christ, we believe in a policy of first steps in our work for peace. Our personal experience of reconciliation entitles us to testify that honesty and trust will grow according as we think less about ourselves and learn to understand not only other people but also ourselves, our own limitations, and our own need for reconciliation and peace.

3.3. It will not have escaped your attention that I have concentrated so far on witness to peace. This was intentional. Not simply because this seems to be suggested by the theme itself, for that might perhaps be to take it too narrowly. No, this emphasis seems to me required because the mission entrusted to the churches embraces both witness and service even in respect of peace. Both are closely interconnected. That is not in dispute. But they are not simply identical and therefore cannot be treated as interchangeable or as capable of replacing each other.

Witness is meant to point to the one for whose sake it takes place. It derives its entire character from surrender to the Lord and seeks to speak of him as clearly and as universally as possible. Service is wholly concerned with devotion to the neighbour. What motivates it is the suffering and the well-being of the fellow human beings whom the service is meant to benefit. For service, it is not supremely important that it should be recognizable as "specifically Christian". Love of the neighbour is not afraid to be secularized as humanitarian action out of a sense of joint responsibility for society. It is devoted unreservedly to the neighbour even to the point of apparent self-surrender.

Witness and service are not intended to be regarded as in contradiction with each other, of course. Witness always also includes elements of service and can itself be understood as service to human beings. The converse is also true. In witness and service what is ultimately involved is the one mission which is carried out in different forms. But there can be no equation of the two, any more than it is possible to identify faith and love. This applies also to witness for peace and service of peace.

Both are part of our mission, but that means that each is part of our mission. As far as service for peace is concerned, the churches today can point to much that they contributed to understanding among the peoples, much that they only could perhaps have done and yet is politically relevant. This makes the distinctive character of all service of peace: precisely because it is meant to promote the common life of human beings, it has to remember the consequences. It can only be constructive if it is practicable, commands itself to reason, capable of cooperation with others whose concern for peace may be based on quite different premises, i.e. if it is not afraid of getting involved in the political field.

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Yet service for peace is not equivalent to witness for peace as understood in the eschatological message of the New Testament. This witness is impossible without utter devotion to the Lord to whom it testifies. Here, too, the question of consequences arises because witness wants to get across to and influence the situation in which it is made. But the question of consequences has a different import here. Witness is to be borne "in season and out of season". Nothing is to be subtracted from it, nor anything added which is not consonant with it. Unlike service for peace, it is not under obligation to make political sense. Here too, of course, there are indispensable consistencies. Witness for peace would lack credibility if it did not lead necessarily to service for peace. But the witness for peace goes beyond service for peace: it is the basis of such service, it accompanies it, and it must also, if need arise, be able to correct it.

But witness is not simply the touchstone of our Christian service for peace. Quite apart from what they do, Christians are under obligation, by God's will and commission, to be witnesses of God's peace to all human beings. It seems to me that we should pause from time to time to make sure that our witness for peace is not being neglected in our zeal in the service of peace.

4. Training for peace

The link between witness for peace and service for peace is especially intimate in the training of Christians for peace. It is becoming increasingly recognized that such training is essential for Christians, as well as for others. The term "peace education" has come into general use to denote this training for peace. But, of course, the term is not proof against misunderstanding or free from the ambiguity which accompanies the use of the term "peace". Yet there is one common element in the different ideas associated with this word "peace" and so with the term "education for peace" as well: namely, the express intention of equipping people to do something for peace and so to work against war, violence, distress and fear. In this section we focus attention on a few aspects of education for peace which are especially important for Christians, though not exclusively for them.

4.1. Peace education is concerned with efforts to achieve world peace. It is also concerned with human life in society and with the resolution of conflicts in the life of individuals and in their personal relationships. Having these different levels of human community in view, Christian education for peace will take seriously the indivisibility of the peace of the Gospel and its claim on human beings in all dimensions of their life. If peace is the sine qua non for the common life of individuals, groups, nations and governments, then there is need for human beings who are consciously serving peace by their attitudes and conduct in great matters as in small. To educate them for this will not guarantee world peace. But there will be more human beings who are equipped and willing to assume responsibility for peace and to change the world in the direction of greater peace.

For this, training in certain basic attitudes and skills is required in

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order to equip people for action to establish peace and in this way to demonstrate their faith in God's promise of peace by their personal commitment. This includes a willingness to deal with and resolve conflicts non-violently. It is unlikely that there will ever be a time when there are no conflicts. To equate peace with absence of conflicts would be an utterly utopian idea. We ourselves are not altogether blameless in this respect. Christians have too often tended to conceal and hush up their conflicts because they have equated peace with the peace of the graveyard, harmony with uniformity, and salvation with safety and order. We should not be afraid, therefore, to admit our conflicts. What really matters is not that we have conflicts but how we handle them. It would represent a considerable advance towards peace if the church of God in the world could be an example for others in this respect.

4.2. Important here is the readiness for dialogue. We cannot be equipped for peace if we are not capable of dialogue. One basic condition for understanding others, reaching mutual agreement and facilitating cooperation is the ability to talk to each other. Objectivity is also essential, since prejudices, aggressive attitudes and enemy stereotypes are a hindrance to real relationships. Objectivity here means encountering others without prejudice, dealing justly with the issue at stake. This certainly does not mean abandoning our own convictions or even merely trimming them; it means being ready to supplement or even correct them by objective information.

Training for peace also means sharpening sensitivity to and appreciation of the extent of need and distress in the world. For example, obsessive fear of possible nuclear annihilation can blind us to other no less serious threats. I am thinking here of the Third World. When life becomes such an intolerable burden that people look to war to secure what is denied them in peace, we cannot stand idly by as mere onlookers. We are summoned here to take sides. Another of the essential features of service for peace, therefore, is solidarity, making it plain that we are on the side of the oppressed, not afraid to make common cause with them to secure justice.

Solidarity calls not only for training in but also readiness for personal sacrifice, which alone makes solidarity really credible. This also includes the readiness to suffer. In some circumstances this is the only way of expressing the desire to solve conflicts without violence. Those who work for justice and peace, those who seek to sensitize people to the needs of others and who identify themselves with the oppressed and disinherited, must be prepared to meet with indifference and even resistance and mockery. Acceptance of such suffering in solidarity with others is one supreme proof of our involvement.

Christians will here remember that suffering is not something unexpected in the life of the Christian disciple and that restraint and rejection are among the distinctive marks of the existence of Christians in this world. To accept and bear this can form part of the service of peace which must be rendered as witness to the peace of the Gospel. This service does not end where we reach the end of our possibilities of action. The invitation to prayer remains open and unassailable; to the prayer which spreads everything out

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before God and commits the ultimate decision into his hands.

In conclusion I come back again to the anecdote with which we began. Will the day come when our children and grandchildren will delight in playing at peace instead of at war? Peace will certainly become a fascinating idea even for children when they find what grown-ups are doing for peace far more persuasive than all efforts to deter war by armaments. Much depends, therefore, on whether we grown-ups are teachable enough really to become trained in the ways of peace, the peace which we wish to proclaim and the peace which we are called to serve.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How are we training for peace today? Can you cite concrete examples? What have you yourself learned from them?
2. What do you consider important for our witness to peace today if it is to be of help to those who long for peace but do not take God's peace into account?
3. Is it still possible to make use of the biblical peace greeting today as a testimony to peace and as an effective means of making peace?
4. How can we make it clear that the Gospel of peace, while summoning us to be servants of peace among our fellow human beings, is also more than this?
Conversely, how are we to make the Gospel of peace heard in our service for peace?
Can you give any first-hand examples of this?
5. Can you suggest possible alternative security systems in which conflicts are resolved without violence?

DISCUSSION GROUP I

The group discussed the addresses by Elenius, Dumas, Brattgaard and Nagy.

1) ELENIUS: CSCE - A Mission for the Churches
DUMAS: Context of Proclamation: The Spiritual and Political
Situation in Europe

The group endorsed the content of the first paper in principle. Members were then invited to introduce themselves. From these presentations, often detailed and personal, it was clear that their diversity reflected the situation in contemporary Europe as a whole. It was noted at the same time that the round of biographical presentations was itself a twofold contribution to the theme, furnishing an example of:

- becoming acquainted with new dialogue partners and achieving an ever-deeper and fuller mutual understanding;
- eliminating ignorance and distrust and creating a climate of growing mutual confidence.

On the "theological foci" (Elenius) of this first address, it was noted that the Augsburg Confession also stresses the importance of human intelligence in political affairs and clearly underlines the political responsibility of Christians.

The "utopias" considered must be related to given realities and be capable of achievement in stages. It is wrong to press perfectionist demands; while acknowledging the progress achieved, we must strive patiently for ever-closer approximations to the goal in view.

In respect of the political responsibility of Christians, the following steps seem important:

- Steady removal of distrust at all levels between persons, governments and systems.
- To this end an increase in the number of contacts and in the reciprocal exchange of information is essential.
- The goal to be kept steadily in view is a "reconciled diversity" free from fear and threats.
- In this connection, the churches and individual Christians have a special responsibility and duty to promote confidence and the objective presentation of problems. But, at the same time, it must be recognized that theology and the church cannot provide ready-made political solutions and infallible remedies valid for all. In the freedom of a conscience bound to the Gospel, Christians will seek peace and strive for adequate non-violent solutions to conflicts.

The basis and source of the church's proclamation is Holy Scripture as the norma normans. At the same time, however, the church's proclamation is a human activity directed to human beings who live in a particular political, social and human situation where the message must reach them.

Peace and justice must be discoverable first of all and in an exemplary

DISCUSSION GRUOP I

degree in congregations and churches. The Christian faith also helps Christians to be calm and tolerant as well as to achieve that realism and objectivity which are essential in all negotiations and decisions. This applies to personal and local conflicts as well as to national and world controversies.

Every individual human being is required to act in a responsible way in his or her "occupation and status". Despite disappointments, Christians must trust in the divine promises which establish hope and love, and they must know "God is on the throne". Preaching God's peace, reconciliation and forgiveness, the churches themselves must also establish peace and reconciliation and strive for peace among the peoples of the world wherever they are called upon to do so and corresponding opportunities exist.

God's commandments constitute the fundamental original ordering of life. They announce the divine will for us as human beings and unmask our sin. Christians are not at liberty, therefore, to entertain any illusions about humanity or the possibility of an ideal world. Rigid perfectionism is not the way to the goal.

In appraising the situation, two dangers must be avoided: an oratorical optimism without any basis in reality, and a resigned pessimism without any confidence and hope.

Political and social confidence should be backed up by treaties, and the authenticity of this confidence should be measured by the ability of people to encounter one another with such openness that none of the partners becomes a no longer calculable risk for the others.

Détente in Europe can only be lasting, of course, if the participating powers also follow up the Helsinki declarations with corresponding actions. They must be encouraged to do this and, in cooperation with all other responsible peoples, to contribute not only their good intentions but also their resources in specialist knowledge and adequate information, opportunities of exchange and mutual participation in contemporary undertakings intended to establish peace and improve political relationships. Lack of time unfortunately prevented the group from fully exploring the helpful statements and suggestions in Prof. Dumas' address.

DISCUSSION GROUP I

2) BRATTGAARD: Worship as Proclamation

Where Christ is the centre, the true church is found and worship is a reality. The roots of Christian worship are in the Bible. On this broad foundation worship can take diverse forms. The basic pattern of Christian worship must constantly be maintained and be recognizable from its anamnestic, epicletic, eschatological and catholic dimensions. A judicious anthropological pastoral dimension is also essential, leaving room for calm, adoration and emotion and encouraging the readiness to receive the gifts worthily (Word and sacrament). The responsibility of catechetical instruction is to prepare and deepen, train and order the legitimate diversity in a spirit of love.

The traditional "top heaviness" and excessive "verbalization" of worship need to be reformed in favour of a worship characterized more by spiritual richness, singing, participation and adoration, and allowing room for the mystery of God. Liturgical worship should not be dismissed as of minor importance but seen rather as the expression of an objective existential total experience. Sincere faith bears witness to others through the attitude of the celebrant and congregation in worship. When a small group of Christians celebrate worship with their pastor, even human beings who remain at a distance and live secularized and mostly one-dimensional lives can feel themselves moved and addressed. Local cultural traditions should also be respected here and welcomed as an enrichment.

Particular attention must be paid in this connection to hymns, liturgical chants and acclamations.

The pastor's sermon should not be mere "pulpit oratory" but a powerful testimony borne to God's love in Jesus Christ and rich in biblical imagery. The homiletic task facing us is only fully comprehended when related to our liturgical responsibility to preach God's Word authoritatively as law and Gospel. Measures of church discipline, general and private confession, must be reflected on and renewed in the context of congregational growth in relation to worship, pastoral care and diaconia. A rich variety of aims and tasks for our church is awaiting us in the theme of Christian worship.

Suggestion: Worship and the Lord's Supper should be more intensively celebrated at Lutheran conferences, too. The work done earlier by the LWF Commission on Worship and the Spiritual Life should be resumed with a view to providing Lutheran churches with assistance and an opportunity to exchange views. It is vital that the eschatological and catholic dimensions of worship be emphasized more in theology and in church life than has been the case so far (Meeting of the WCC Plenary Commission on Faith and Order, Accra, Ghana, 1974).

DISCUSSION GROUP I

3) NAGY: Proclamation through Service to the Individual and to Society

When members of the group exchanged experiences about the opportunities and limits of "diakonal" work in the different churches and countries, we realized the rich diversity of activities which can be described as "charitative diakonia". To some extent confined to the domestic church sphere, the ministry of visitation and a corresponding financial responsibility are the only remaining efforts to achieve genuine stewardship, though the address's conception of stewardship is broader.

The group agree with the "theology of service ("diakonia")" in affirming that it is the Holy Spirit who, through his gifts (Word and sacrament) kindles faith, love and hope and inspires the works of faith. Behind all "diakonia" stands the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will also sensitize congregations and churches to structural questions, as happens for example in church laws, budget planning (allocation of church resources) and in the discovery and invention of new "diakonal" tasks.

The Holy Spirit also guides the praying and believing community to a new spirituality, such as is found, for instance, in communities, and for which training can be provided in retreats and times of spiritual refreshment.

Work is only the "diakonia" based on the love of Christ if it has a spiritual basis. We know from experience that people only persist in difficult ministries if there is a spiritual basis and continuing spiritual support.

Specialist staff are required for the "diakonal" work of churches and congregations. But the entire responsibility should not be committed to the specialists simply as specialists. Here, as in the ministry of the church generally, we must retain alongside all full-time paid ministries a dimension of voluntary service, rendered by people called by the Holy Spirit to service. This demonstrates the "gratuitous" nature of grace. Similarly, the churches should become examples of a new life-style for society, demonstrating a responsible use of time, talents and treasure. This is all the more urgent in view of the steadily diminishing resources available to society.

A church which is aware of the need for self-discipline will also have to ensure a proper balance between voluntary service and paid work. The group recognizes here first essays in the direction of a "structural diakonia" which knows that not all work is remunerable and that "diakonia" must not come to a halt when funds are no longer available for it in a church budget.

In this context the church attests by its action God's love to human beings as revealed in Christ and witnessed to in Holy Scripture.

In addition to "diakonal" responsibility at the congregational and territorial level, there is ecumenical "diakonia" which takes the form of mutual assistance and cooperation as partners and, over and above this, renders service to the one humanity.

In cooperation with governments and different aid organizations, service is to be rendered to the "distant neighbour" in a multitude of different ways. In the concern for the "whole human being", a special significance attaches to the little gift, true remembrance and constant prayer.

DISCUSSION GROUP II

The group discussed the addresses by Dumas, Brattgaard and Nagy.

1) DUMAS: Context of Proclamation: The Intellectual and Political Situation in Europe

I. On the basis of Prof. Dumas' address and the questions it raises, the group soon reached agreement:

- 1) That despite all the different Christian experiences of the peoples of Europe, and despite all the consequent differences in the intellectual and political situations in contemporary Europe, we have to reckon with the solidarity of human existence (as defined in the Bible) in its alienation from God and in its being nevertheless sought by and addressed by God.
At no time and in no place can proclamation ignore this basic reality.
- 2) That the contemporary situation in which individuals, nations and churches find themselves is so influential that, whether we like it or not, proclamation is also affected by it. It was not a question for the group, therefore, whether the context was to be brought into the proclamation but only how this was to be done.
In the ensuing discussion the following possible misunderstandings and dangers were pointed out:

- a) In each case the context poses specific questions for proclamation but does not in itself provide the answers appropriate to the Gospel.
To rest content with a purely sociological analysis still leaves unsaid the essential thing, namely, the promise of the liberating message of God. No proclamation can be described as Christian if it is not open to the vertical dimension.
- b) Deliberately to accept and assume the context calls for an existential commitment on the part of both preacher and hearer. If we persist in a merely spectator stance, we are rejecting solidarity and witness. We forfeit the trust which is indispensable and lose our credibility. The question of the conditions in which the church or the individual Christian or both must abandon neutrality and take sides inescapably arises here.
- c) On the other hand, to brand as demonic the intellectual and political situation of one's own society or perhaps that of our neighbour across the way in his very different context, leads to fear and the construction of enemy stereotypes.
Fear paralyzes. It entails the loss of that liberty of God's children which is promised to us in the Gospel. Enemy stereotypes are incompatible with the brotherly and sisterly love made possible on the basis of this freedom.

DISCUSSION GROUP II

II. In further discussion we probed more deeply some of Dumas' statements in his analysis of the situation.

- 1) There was broad agreement with his description of a "society in movement" both in East Europe and West, if in different ways. So too with Dumas' observation that the younger generation is increasingly sceptical about institutions and bureaucracy and in consequence is taking flight into a purely private realm.
- 2) On the other hand, there was criticism of his short summary of crises in all forms of society which was felt to be too undifferentiated. A more thorough investigation and evaluation of possible differences between East and West was needed. This was also evident from the short reports given by group members of their present social contexts. It was possible, for example, to take a favourable view of pointed questions addressed to the church and to Christians by their environment which force them to explain who they are (as has evidently happened in some socialist countries), without any prior need to scrutinize painfully the context for possible questions.
- 3) We had to leave open the question as to whether the tendency to a more "pietistic" spirituality in some other churches in Eastern Europe was the result of the history of these nations or a response to the social environment.
- 4) The group believes that the distinction which Dumas makes between the cultural and the spiritual (intellectual?) needs further clarification since there are undeniably elements which transcend the cultural dimension, indeed, spiritual elements. It was pointed out, for example, that questions about transcendence are echoed in more recent literature influenced by Marxism.

III. The group was stimulated by the second part of Dumas' third question to spend the concluding part of its discussion in efforts to formulate pressing tasks for the churches - in East and West - in the light of their mission.

- 1) The starting point for their contribution to the elimination of fear, mistrust, etc., and to the creation of an atmosphere of confidence among nations, churches and ideological camps must be within themselves and their own life and practice.
- 2) Important here will be
 - the unmasking of prejudices and resistance to their influence;
 - a refusal to allow enemy stereotypes to be forced upon us, and, still less, to create them for ourselves.

For churches in the West, this could mean the refusal, for example, to succumb to a shallow anti-communism.

- 3) Another precondition for this is the effort to achieve the maximum of reliable information about our neighbours and to ensure that it becomes possible for others to understand our own situation.
- 4) The group regarded the frank way in which its members expressed their views as a promising start in this direction.

DISCUSSION GRUOP II

2) BRATTGAARD: Worship as Proclamation

Discussion was focused on the question of the esteem in which worship is held in our churches. After a long exchange of experiences as to the when and where of meetings for worship, the group was broadly in agreement that the Sunday service was quite indispensable and that church premises are the appropriate setting for this worship service, and this not merely on practical grounds.

- Weekday services are popular everywhere but obviously are no substitute for the Sunday service.
- House meetings are growing in popularity and help to strengthen fellowship, but even these "services" are no substitute for the emotional attachment to the consecrated place.
- Representatives of the Baltic churches pointed out the opportunity which well-attended cemetery services afforded for proclaiming the Gospel even to those who remain aloof from the church.
- Surprisingly enough, the rhythm of the world of work and industrial society, which does not adopt the weekly rhythm, has had little influence on the practice of Sunday worship.
- Recent findings in individual and social psychology demonstrate, on the contrary, the importance of this weekly rhythm inherited from the church tradition. Greater importance should also be attached once more to the Christian Year. The group discussed Brattgaard's thesis that "worship as proclamation" must be a "sign of peace and reconciliation" if the world is to see that in Christ we are called to unity. It referred to the now subsiding controversy over the ordination of women as one illustration of how a return to the scriptures, interpreted in the Reformation way, can reconcile parties in the church.

The group also endorsed the basic principle of Brattgaard's address, viz, that worship not only includes proclamation but is also itself proclamation.

DISCUSSION GROUP II

3) NAGY: Proclamation through Service to the Individual and to Society

The group agreed with the main thrust of Prof. Nagy's address but a very lively discussion followed on certain selected themes.

I. The group thoroughly agreed with the speaker's recognition that Lutheran theology and Lutheran churches have so far not sufficiently reflected on nor adequately translated into practice the concrete significance of incarnation for life and service in and for this world, and the influence it is intended to have on this life and service. What matters is not the salvation of the church but the salvation of all humanity. But to proclaim salvation while showing no concern for human welfare will never be other than essentially incredible.

But in view of the activist tendencies in the churches of the West especially, in recent years, still fresh in memory, the group stressed that the achievement of a "good and healthy world" is something reserved for God's eschatological new creation. For all the effort that is required of us, the building of this world is not within our power.

It was suggested here that we needed to reflect more deeply on the connection between the "world" in the biblical sense and what we have described as the "context".

II. In a rich exchange of experiences it became clear just how different the situations are not only when East is compared with West but also when country is compared with country.

It is certainly not possible everywhere to maintain "diakonal" institutions in the traditional sense; to do so would in any case stretch the often slender resources of some churches to breaking point. But hitherto unsuspected possibilities of "diakonal" ministry in the broadest sense are available to every church. These must be identified and put into practice in a loving and unpretentious eagerness to serve. Some of our colleagues from churches in the East stressed that a transformed self-understanding of this kind on the part of the churches, matched by a corresponding practical effort, was increasingly meeting with tolerance and sometimes even with comprehension in the socialist societies of their native countries.

The "challenges" listed by Nagy for the "diakonal" service of our "churches in Europe" must certainly be faced and responded to by all the churches in both East and West. For some of these churches, however, service of the individual human being will in the long run be all that is possible. But the positive influence of this microdiaconia even on social contexts will certainly not be long in appearing. Such service makes visible the message of reconciliation with God and his love to us. Only by a proclamation of this kind, authenticated by its own example, can lethargy, indolence, uncertainty and passivity be pierced, and congregations move towards a more joyful readiness to make sacrifices and take risks and if necessary accept suffering for the truth's sake, and train and equip

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themselves for this.

Certainly the church must stand by the people who are marginalized, but it must nonetheless not allow discussions to be broken off with any of the social forces in its environment at any given time.

Part of its "watchman's office" (however disreputable this term may have become for many) will be to encourage the political authorities of its country to be increasingly ready for dialogue, especially in times of crisis.

III. There was some opposition to Thesis 1 since it clearly expects smaller communities almost automatically to have a greater dynamic. In the light of the baptismal command with its mandate for public mission, the church will not be able to reverse its development and become again a small and supposedly intact intimate group, at least not if it has any say in the matter.

IV. Some of the questions raised in the paper were considered in a final round of discussions:

Questions 1 and 2 were felt to be rhetorical and were not considered further. It was affirmed that the Holy Spirit cannot in the last analysis be manipulated. Certainly we shall have to become more open and obedient than ever before to his operation, when, where and how he wills.

The group gave the 3rd question a different emphasis. As can be illustrated from church history, imbalances of the kind mentioned in the question are not a danger for the church as an organization, but are certainly so for the proclamation entrusted to the church, for these imbalances either ensure the failure of the proclamation or else deprive it of its credibility.

With respect to questions 4 and 5, any return to a "first century church life-style" was considered impossible. (It is impossible for us to turn back the wheel of history!) Even the attempt to do so, however, would be dangerous because it would ignore the context of our present age and thus completely bypass the real life of human beings in our society. Reference was made, however, to isolated efforts on the part of the younger generation to achieve a so-called "alternative" life-style and to the need to watch these efforts very closely and to support them.

On question 6: The rediscovery of the extended family was emphasized as a specific and very relevant task for the whole church and all its members. Attempts should be made to influence legislation in all European countries so it includes suitable measures to promote life in extended families.

DISCUSSION GROUP III

The group discussed the addresses by Boendermaker, Schuller and Zeddes.

1) BOENDERMAKER: Proclamation in the Light of the Lutheran Confession

The whole discussion was extremely animated, an indication of the address's fundamental significance for the group.

One of the questions we discussed right away was the content and form of the biblical message. The importance of seeing form and content as a unity was emphasized by many speakers. In this connection, it was stressed that "rhetoric", with its inherent relation to content, was one aspect of form.

In the discussion of the biblical examples given in the address, a variety of views emerged. Many found the method of biblical exegesis used by the speaker helpful in grasping the message clearly. Special emphasis was laid on the great importance of paying attention to the biblical "imagery" and using it for proclamation. At the same time, a warning was given of the dangers of allegorical exegesis. It was agreed that we needed to have a sharp ear for the "key words" of the biblical text in order to grasp the deep dimensions of the divine message. One lay member of the group warned us not to be too theological in biblical exegesis, and stressed the value of reading the Bible in a simple unsophisticated way, so allowing the "joy of the Gospel" to come to us as we read.

After various theological positions had been stated, we were warned not to lose our way in extreme views either as pastors or as congregations. But there was receptivity for a variety of methods from which help and enrichment could be derived for the particular context and the particular audience in view in proclamation.

Finally, the group considered three of the four questions posed at the conclusion of the address.

There was a positive answer to question 1, taken together with the speaker's explanations. It was stressed here that the term "confession" was being used in a wider and broader sense than is usually the case. In this sense it can include many of Luther's statements and not just the "confessional documents".

As for question 2, while it was agreed that we need to respect the "unity of the Bible", it was stressed at the same time that there are contradictions in the Bible which cannot simply be harmonized without difficulty.

The important thing here is that we should always read the Bible in the light of its central message as the confession teaches us to do. We must read the Old Testament with "New Testament" spectacles and the New Testament against the background of the Old. For us as Christians the Bible is the "voice of God", but this voice is "modulated". This does not mean, however, that we are at liberty to blunt the cutting edge of the biblical statements.

On question 4, the group was unanimous that concrete guidelines for Christian responsibility in the social and political field can be derived only indirectly

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from the Bible. What the Bible does do is to provide us with the basic motivation for our actions and show us the direction they should take. We can learn from the Bible in which God comes to us as the One who loves us, the "attitude to life" which grows from this love.

2) SCHULLER: Proclamation as a Dimension of Pastoral Care

I. We began our discussion by reflecting on how pastoral care can come to be regarded as a task of the congregation and not simply of the pastor. One member of the group took the view that in many cases the pastor himself so organized things that the whole responsibility devolved upon him. On the other hand, members of the congregation often take the view, and many examples were cited of this, that the pastor alone is responsible for everything, even in the field of pastoral care.

The goal towards which both the pastor and the congregation should strive is the elimination of the false picture, on the one hand, of the pastor (with a "halo") and, on the other hand, of the congregation ("subordinate to the pastor"). Illustrations were given from different churches of practical cooperation between pastors and members of the congregation, and it was pointed out how such cooperation frequently does not go far enough. The importance of training lay colleagues for the future was stressed.

Supplementing his address, the speaker described in detail how the "neighbourhoods" functioned in the congregations of Siebenbürgen. Members of the group were deeply impressed by the existence of such a vigorous heritage of popular participation in church life. Contrasting examples were cited from other churches, where like possibilities do not exist even although the tasks of the congregation in the field of pastoral care are not diminishing. The group discussed the special responsibilities of the Christian congregation in respect of the vulnerable and lonely, the aged and the young, in the light of the experiences of various churches. Special attention was given to new ways of tackling these aspects of church work.

II. Next we discussed the "purpose of pastoral care". Must it always be the concern of Christian pastoral work to lead the other person in the direction of Christian faith and life, or can conversation between human beings simply with the object of helping them as human beings be regarded as genuine pastoral care? Several members of the group gave examples from their own experience of situations where the provision of simple human advice without any specific Christian dimension can be the right thing to do.

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But it was also agreed that in exercising pastoral care, we are not at liberty to conceal the fact that we are Christians. And in the case of pastoral care within the congregation itself, of course, it is most important that there should be a genuine and full proclamation of the Gospel. In this connection, it was emphasized, in accord with the address, that pastoral care must always have the character of an invitation. Illustrations of practical pastoral care were provided from various churches: these included "Good Samaritan" phone services where people can obtain pastoral help anonymously, counseling centres in which pastors and lay people work together, and also a more "haphazard" form of pastoral care at work and in factories, etc. Particular interest was shown by the group in an example of pastoral care where contact was established by telephone both "actively" and "passively" with and between old and lonely people. Here, on the one hand, people seeking help could phone a certain number, and on the other, members of the congregation could phone old and lonely people and these could phone each other, each morning, perhaps to seek the spiritual or practical help they needed. The group was particularly impressed by information about opportunities for pastoral care which undoubtedly exist even in circumstances which make church work difficult.

The group finally discussed the question of the real meaning of "pastoral care". One suggested answer was: "concern for the fellow human being in his or her integrity".

3) ZEDDIES: Proclamation in the Service of Peace

- I. The group began its discussion of this address by taking up the story told at the beginning of the address, about children playing at war. Many members of the group stressed the responsibility of adults. We ourselves are to blame for the fact that children are unable to play at peace. In view of the fact that the danger of war has now become so serious, we must try to prevent children from getting accustomed to the idea of war. Others thought that the example was somewhat farfetched.
- II. One very valuable point in the address, it was felt, was the insistence on the importance of the individual who receives God's peace and thereby becomes equipped to make peace a reality both in his or her immediate circle and also in the wider sphere of church, social and political life.
- III. The group also discussed in detail the relationship between the Old Testament "shalom" and the New Testament "peace".

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Was the New Testament concept a narrower one than the Old Testament concept? Zeddies himself stressed that "peace" in the New Testament sense brings a new dimension, because peace in Christ is realized in a holistic manner. The broad range of the Old Testament idea is also reflected in the New Testament.

- IV. Some members of the group pointed out the dangerous position of those with power. These people with power see "peace" as the maintenance of their power so that (possibly) unjust situations continue as before, whereas, for the oppressed, war becomes a possible means of achieving justice. People often speak of peace as if they expected the other party to govern itself by the assumptions they themselves have established. "Peace" is then identified with one's own desires. Here the special task of the church is to insist repeatedly on peace in the full sense of the word.
- V. The question was raised as to whether, by emphasizing so strongly the assertion that "in the last analysis, peace is something which is the gift of God", we do not run the risk of folding our arms and doing nothing. In answer, reference was made to Weizsäcker's aphorism: "The peace we cannot make enables us to work for the peace we have a duty to make". There are many areas in which we can work for peace as individual Christians and as churches, but the basis for this work must always be the peace of God. The task of proclamation, therefore, of proclaiming this peace of God, is of decisive importance for the service of peace. Individual Christians - often in cooperation with one another - can in practice achieve great things in this area, e.g. in their contacts with politicians and other leaders. The LWF as an organization can help the individual churches by publishing and disseminating decisions and statements on these issues for use in individual congregations as the basis of further work on questions of peace.
- VI. It was also emphasized in further discussion that the responsibility to work hard for peace must produce its first effects within the church itself, not least in the sense that here, too, there can be no question of "playing the power game" but only of resolving conflicts in a genuine fellowship and being ready to practice genuine reconciliation.

DISCUSSION GROUP IV

The group discussed the addresses by Schuller, Boendermaker and Zeddis.

1) SCHULLER: Proclamation as a Dimension of Pastoral Care

Throughout the discussions in this group, a constantly recurring question was whether the form of pastoral care presented in the address was the only possible one or whether other forms are not also required today. Other questions of pastoral care were also discussed with examples given from the various countries represented in the group.

In the following report, therefore, we shall first summarize the discussion on the different forms of pastoral care. This will be followed by a brief résumé of discussion on other themes. To begin with, it was noted that when people today need pastoral advice they mostly turn to the psychotherapist rather than to the parson. But there are also many lonely and desperate people who remain unaided. Pastoral care should not begin, therefore, only after an emergency has arisen but should be prophylactic in character.

The form of pastoral care described in the address will not in all cases prove adequate, especially since a certain danger of repression is inherent in it. Other modern forms of pastoral care will also need to be used. In this respect, psychology has proved itself a useful auxiliary discipline for anyone actively engaged in pastoral care.

Schuller defended his view that the Gospel should be verbalized in every pastoral ministry since the aim of pastoral care is reception into the worshiping community and into eucharistic fellowship. He described the situation in the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Siebenbürgen. Not only church services but also baptisms, weddings and church funerals offer a variety of opportunities for pastoral work. In view of this background, other forms of pastoral care are clearly not at present needed in Siebenbürgen. It was pointed out in discussion, however, that in other places and cases quite different methods will need to be used. It remains true, however, that those engaged in pastoral care must have the courage to open their Bibles.

Those engaged in pastoral care must also realize quite clearly that others in the congregation beside themselves are also engaged in providing pastoral care. Initiatives of this kind are to be encouraged, e.g. by the establishment of house groups. In conclusion, it was pointed out that effective pastoral care can only be provided by those who are themselves ready to seek and welcome pastoral care from others.

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2) BOENDERMAKER: Proclamation in the Light of the Lutheran Confession

Discussion began with participants pointing out some of the positions adopted by Boendermaker which they would like to have discussed in more detail.

I. Biblical theology summarizes the one coherent message which the Bible has to convey, for all its rich diversity. The confession of faith summarizes what must be said in the "kairos" of a decisive epoch. Systematic theology (dogmatics) reflects on the relationships between these data and the particular period in question. By doing so, it helps to make contemporary proclamation relevant.

Are these positions true? Are they helpful in clarifying the relations between the Bible, the (Lutheran) confession of faith and contemporary proclamation?

It is impossible to answer this question without first clarifying the mutual relationship between the Bible, confession and proclamation. These three entities are unquestionably inseparable. But it is impossible to consider them in abstraction; they have to be fitted into the context of the age and country in which the proclamation takes place. The Augsburg Confession, for example, is written in the language of its period; but we have known, since Bonhoeffer at the latest, that every age has to find its own language. It is not possible to proclaim Luther's theology, but the Word of God must be proclaimed in Luther's sense in contemporary language in every age.

If proclamation is to be responsible, therefore, it must repeatedly undergo afresh a process which begins with the written Word of God (Bible), and with the help of the confession finally arrives at the preached Word. Here the preacher must realize above all that he is not preaching about the Bible but about God. Only in this way is room left for the operation of the Holy Spirit who is able to inspire the hearers of the preached Word to begin afresh to formulate the confession of faith.

II. The address says something about the abiding significance of certain aspects of the Reformation approach to the Bible. On one of these aspects, namely, the need to let the images of the Bible speak for themselves, the comment was made that it is illegitimate to make this important truth into an absolute. The preacher can always make use of images taken from his contemporary context, provided the selection of these images follows the direction indicated by the Bible and its images. Images drawn from the world of technology are generally not particularly appropriate for the interpretation of biblical truths.

III. What value do you attach to the address's approaches to hermeneutic and exegetical questions? Does the address do justice to the exegetical methods inherited from the 19th and 20th centuries? Has the distinction

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between biblicalism and this "letting the text speak for itself" been made clear? Have you any comment on the specific examples given? Can you make any use of them? Or have you always approached them in this way? How can we from our different countries help each other to advance in this field?

It is not easy to define the distinction between biblicalism, on the one hand, and "letting the Bible speak for itself", on the other, since there will always be encroachments in both directions. There will always be encroachments in the direction of biblicalism when the proclamation is based on a fundamentalist view of scripture. The limits of the "let the Bible speak for itself" approach will be transgressed when disciplined proclamation succumbs to an undisciplined indulgence in unrestrained experimentation.

All the participants in the discussion welcomed the method indicated in the address, whereby the biblical images themselves are brought to life in contemporary proclamation, as a correct and helpful method, provided the images are not used allegorically. It was also suggested that images borrowed from the ordinary life of the recipients of the proclamation should be used, as well as general human experiences, to make clear the substance of the message proclaimed.

IV. In relation to a Christian ethic in daily life, the Bible has a multiple role: A sound biblical theology, i.e. one without a philosophical envelope, can help people today to view the problems of our time in a more comprehensive way and without illusions. Care must be taken here, of course, not to rush too quickly to deduce from the scripture rules for Christian behaviour in the world. Biblical theology can help us here to see specific problems in the total context of biblical truth. The confession also can help us to deal effectively with the problems of our day. We need to be very clear here, of course, that the Lutheran confession is a "snapshot" dating from the time of the Reformation. We have no wish to resile from it, but at the same time we must make it the starting point for further study and reflection.

DISCUSSION GROUP IV

ZEDDIES: Proclamation in the Service of Peace

The outcome of our discussion on the concluding questions in Zeddies' address was a catalogue of alternative proposals for peace education, put forward by the participants in the discussion. Most of them related to programs designed to remove obstacles to peace but they also included actions whereby the churches can contribute to safeguarding peace.

It was pointed out at the beginning of our discussion that the peace which God has established with us is the basis for our ability to live at peace with one another in the world. We must ourselves accept God's peace, and by our proclamation and our example kindle in our fellow human beings the longing for peace.

Various measures for safeguarding peace were mentioned next, measures which the participants in discussion were convinced can be put into operation by churches and individual Christians.

One obstacle to peace in the world is the inequitable distribution of resources. Here the churches could propose appropriate measures for the redistribution of wealth and in this way contribute to the relief of poverty and starvation in the world.

The churches could also urge the implementation of human rights and, in particular, condemn all forms of racism which still exists in various forms even in Europe.

To achieve these goals, the whole educational and training system needs to be transformed. A start must be made in the family itself by educating children for peace and helping young people to grow up in a spirit of international friendship.

Since the economy itself can also produce threats to peace, full information should be provided for in this area and opportunities created among the people of Europe and the whole world for a free exchange of opinions.

In their proclamation the churches should repeatedly point out that the human aggressive instinct and the human lust for power are irreconcilable with the will of God.

Finally it was emphasized that the churches must not only contribute to the removal of obstacles to peace but also have opportunities of actively promoting peace, without denying the primary responsibilities of the politicians in this field.

The most effective counter to hatred between the nations is the creation of trust and confidence. Here the churches have a special opportunity. In all international meetings organized by the churches, confidence-building measures should have a place high on the agenda.

Qualified Christians from the churches' own ranks should be encouraged by the churches to engage actively in the political life of their own countries and in this way to promote peace.

C O M M U N I Q U E

(Approved by the Plenary)

At the invitation of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Conference of Lutheran Churches in Europe of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) met in Tallinn (USSR) from 7 to 14 September 1980. This was the first time that a Lutheran church in the Soviet Union was host to an international gathering of the LWF, which comprises 98 Lutheran churches with 54 million members in all the continents of the world. In addition to the Estonian church in the USSR, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia and the Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Church are members of the LWF.

Besides the some 100 delegates from 32 Lutheran churches in Europe, there were representatives of the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches, the Russian Orthodox Church, Estonian Baptists and Methodists, and the Christian Peace Conference. Their participation showed the importance which the Lutheran World Federation attaches to ecumenical collaboration. Metropolitan Alexy of Tallinn read a message of greeting to the gathering from Patriarch Pimen. Representatives from Lutheran churches in Africa, Latin America and North America expressed the interest and importance of this regional conference for sister churches in other parts of the world.

At the opening session, delegates were welcomed in the name of the Council for Religious Affairs in Moscow by Mr. Leopold Piip, official representative of the Council for Religious Affairs of the Estonian Soviet Republic. During the conference, a reception was given by Mrs. Meta Vannas, deputy chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic, and by the Peace Committee and the Association for the Development of Friendship and Cultural Relations with Other Countries.

Former Archbishop Martti Simojoki (Finland) presided over the conference, which had been organized by the Europe secretariat of the LWF's Department of Church Cooperation. He shared the chairmanship with Archbishop Edgar Hark of the Estonian church, Bishop Heinrich Rathke (GDR) and Pastor Albert Greiner (France).

The conference, whose theme was "Proclamation Today", considered the different aspects of Christian witness and service in the light of the special challenges of Europe today. Seven addresses on the theme dealt with worship, pastoral care and counselling, diaconia in its social and political context, the Christian witness for peace and the churches' responsibility for promoting the objectives of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). These addresses were given by Pastor Jaakko Elenius (Finland), Dr. André Dumas (France), Dr. J.F. Boendermaker (Netherlands), Bishop

Helge Brattgaard (Sweden), Dean Michael Schuller (Romania), Dr. Gyula Nagy (Hungary) and Dr. Helmut Zeddies (GDR). The delegates were divided into four working groups to discuss the addresses, and their conclusions were summarized in a report. This report, together with the addresses themselves, will be used as the basis for future work by the churches and various LWF committees. The documentation of this conference will also be used in the preparations for the VIIth Lutheran World Federation Assembly to be held in 1984 in Budapest, the first to take place in a socialist country of Europe.

Although the delegates at Tallinn came from very differing situations, there was agreement that Christians in the whole of Europe have the task of striving to make a common witness, and that the churches in both east and west have to live and convey the message of reconciliation which has been entrusted to them, obeying the Lord's command to be bringers of peace at both the national and international level. In view of the dangerous developments threatening peace in the world, it is most urgent that the churches help to build up confidence between nations. Looking toward the forthcoming CSCE follow-up conference in Madrid, the participants insisted that the churches must do everything in their power to help this conference continue the efforts toward security and cooperation.

Another important aspect of the meeting related to the problems of proclamation in the context of a secularized world, its opportunities and dangers. The questions and problems which confront people today challenge the churches to a rediscovery and reinterpretation of the Gospel, bringing to the secularized societies of Europe by preaching and presence their witness to the Gospel and the meaning it can give to life.

Along with their discussions and studies of the conference theme, the delegates had an opportunity to share in the life of the Estonian church. Lutheran congregations in Tallinn took part in the opening service in the cathedral and in the services held every morning in the St. John's Church. The theme, "Proclamation Today", was movingly expressed in an evening service of church music in which the younger generation was strongly represented in the five choirs taking part.

At the end of the meeting, on Sunday, 14 September, delegates went in small groups to visit various Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian parishes and also the Finnish-speaking congregations in Leningrad and Petrosavodsk. They attended services and talked with church officials and members of the congregations. Another group, led by the LWF general secretary, Dr. Carl Mau, had an opportunity to visit German-speaking congregations in Zelino-grad, Karaganda, Frunse and Alma-Ata.

Tallinn, 14 September 1980

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